

PAGANY

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THE UNPLOUGHED PATCH

William March

Since Andrew Tallon had created out of his deformity a barrier which separated him from others, he left his farm rarely, coming to Gramlings store, or driving into Hodgetown, only when it was necessary to buy supplies for himself and his sister-in-law, or to have a wagon mended or a mule shod. He had a deep distrust of people: He imagined they made jokes on his harelip and that they mocked, behind his back, his grunting, labored speech. There had been a time when he held lightly his affliction. In those days he had not minded the crude jokes at his expense. Indeed, he had taken a sort of pride in his split lip, exaggerating, for the amusement of his friends, the grunting sounds that served him as words. But that was before his brother, Jim, had married Hallie Barrows and brought her to live at the old Tallon place, which the brothers shared. Of late he spoke rarely, only when his necessities compelled speech, and when he did, he turned the scarred side of his mouth away from his listener and covered his lips with his hands.

At first, the people of the county had found it difficult to understand the change that had come over him. They had known of his infatuation for Hallie Barrows—he had made it plain enough that night at Ed Wrenn's place—and they had watched his courtship with amused interest. But nobody had suspected that Jim Tallon was also in love with Hallie until they ran off to the county seat and married. Everybody predicted,

then, that the deep affection which existed between the Tallon brothers would be broken, but, so far as they were able to learn, nothing of the sort had happened: Jim continued to work for the Hodge Lumber Company, and Andrew ran the farm, precisely as before.

The fact that Jim, after his wedding, had started drinking heavily, surprised no one: The Hallons had always been notorious drunkards. Old man Lemuel Tallon, the father of the boys, although dead for ten years now, was still discussed in the county. He had been a red faced, jovial old man, who drove down the country roads, a bottle of moonshine whiskey by his side, lashing his mules with a whip and singing sentimental songs in a hoarse, powerful voice. They remembered, also, Bradford Tallon, the oldest of the boys, who had followed conscientiously, if less effectively, the path of his father.

So when Jim took to hard drinking, folks were not surprised. It was in his blood, they argued. Later, when he deserted his wife, the people at Gramlings store, gossiping, agreed they had expected that: Jim Tallon could never be tied down to any one woman, they said. Jim was simply not a family man. They discussed his derelictions in excited groups: The Tallons, with their drunkenness and their eccentricities, had again furnished material for gossip!

It is odd that the women of the county had never laid Jim's downfall at Hallie's door: They had never liked her, and had always been suspicious of her. There was nothing very tangible on which to base their disapproval; they admitted that she had made Jim a good wife—a much better one than he had deserved—and, since his departure, she had kept house conscientiously for the defeated Andrew. The basis of their dislike was, probably, the fact that the Barrows were aliens in Pearl County. Then, too, men had always hung around her as if she were a rutting animal. The women agreed that she could not be blamed, rightly, for that, men being fools, yet neither could she be forgiven: Certainly Hallie had encouraged none of her suitors: She had ridiculed and laughed them all down, just as she had laughed down Andrew, until Jim had taken the place of his defeated brother, and married her before anybody even suspected that he was interested.

While the change in Jim Tallon was not unexpected, and not difficult to account for, the change in his brother was deeper, there being nothing in the Tallon tradition to account for moroseness. But, after awhile, the people of the county accepted him as he was, and presently nobody remembered any more that a few months ago he had been gay and lighthearted, with a turn for practical jokes, and a love of country horseplay.

One Saturday afternoon in June, Andrew Tallon shaved his chin

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and changed his working clothes for the brown suit he wore on Sundays, and on his regular Saturday afternoon visits to Gramlings store. He put on the white shirt that Hallie had ironed for him, and stood examining himself in the mirror that hung above his washstand.

He was a powerfully built man with unsagged shoulders that tapered to compressed flanks. Between his thighs and knees, the line of his legs flared out persistently, and curved again, less strongly, at his calves. His hair was light brown, and grew close to his skull; his eyes were small and very blue, and except for his mouth, with its triangular cleft that sprang angrily from lip to nose, he would have been considered a handsome man, handsomer, perhaps, than his brother Jim, with whom most of the girls in Pearl County were, in spite of his marriage, still in love.

As Andrew stood that afternoon gazing at his reflection, turning his head this way and that, examining it from every angle, there was a sullen, uncomprehending expression on his face. He resembled a man unjustly condemned for a reason that he can neither remedy nor understand. Then he heard Hallie moving about the house, and automatically he raised his hand with a defensive motion, and covered his twisted, puckered lips. Of late, the gesture had become habitual with him. He turned away from the mirror and approached the door, and stood there, his eyebrows drawn together, listening intently.

When Hallie's steps died away, he lowered his hand and buttoned his shirt slowly. Later he picked up his coat and opened the bedroom door, peering out cautiously. Hallie was in the kitchen, bending over a pan in which she was washing the dishes from dinner. The heat from the stove, and the heat from the June sun, had brought perspiration on her body. Her armpits were damp with sweat and two irregular islands of moisture stained her shoulders. Her damp dress followed limply the line of her body, accentuating the fact that she would soon have a baby. A moment later she turned from her dish pan to the table, bending over it. As she did so, her breasts, as firm and erect as pine cones, with nipples shadowed duskily, sprang upward and came sharply into relief. At the sight of her breasts, Andrew closed his door again and stood with his face pressed against the panel. His heart was beating too rapidly and his throat felt tight and miserable. His passion for Hallie was hopeless, and he had known that for a long time.

Then, as Andrew stood with his face pressed against the door, conscious of his love in every part of his body, Hallie began to sing an old song. Her voice was surprisingly small for so full bodied a woman. It was a mere ghost of a voice, but it rose, thin and clear, and carried above the rattle of the dishes . . .

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"Down on her knees before him,
She pleaded for her life,
But deep into her bosom,
He plunged a fatal knife!"

Andrew reopened the door softly and stood looking at her. She straightened up, raising her arm and pressing back a strand of black hair which had fallen into her eyes. She was letting her hair grow again, and it had reached a difficult length. When she had arranged the lock in place, and secured it with a pin, she continued her song;

"Oh, I'll forgive you, Willie!
Was her last and dying breath,
For you have never deceived me,
So I close my eyes in death."

Andrew closed the door behind him and came into the huge high ceilinged kitchen. This was the first time that Hallie had sung since Jim's disappearance. He counted the singing a good omen.

She died by the hot and jealous hand,
Nor sickness caused her death,
She died by the hot and jealous hand,
Of the one that she loved best . . ."

Then, as if sensing his presence, Hallie stopped suddenly, straightened, and turned, and looked at Andrew contemptuously. Instantly he raised his hand and covered his mouth in confusion, an uncertain, pleading look in his face. A wedge of sunlight came strongly into the room through a window set high in the wall. The other windows had been closed, and the shades drawn, against the dust from the road and the heat, and in the semi-darkness of the kitchen the wedge-like slope of light was distinct and fluid. In it midges drifted, or leaped upward, as if on springs, to fall again to their original places. Against the hard glare, Andrew's forearms seemed darker than they were, and the bleached hairs that grew thick and flat from elbow to wrist, and across the backs of his hands, seemed incongruous and unnatural.

And so Andrew stood there, uncertain, and looked at his sister-in-law. He was afraid to speak, to make a motion, because the thing he said, or the thing he did, was, invariably, what displeased her most.

"I'll be going, now, Hallie," he said. His voice was shocking. It was grunting and tortured, and so blurred that his words were scarcely distinguishable as speech.

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Hallie made no sign that she had heard him, but she walked across the room and took from the kitchen safe a list, which she had prepared, containing the groceries and the household necessities for the coming week. Andrew took the list without looking at it, and folded it into his pocket clumsily. Hallie turned back to her dishes, annoyed at his slowness, anxious for him to go, her face without expression. Hers was the high-colored, vigorous prettiness of rustic beauties. Her eyes were jet-like, both in color, and in their uncompromising hardness, but her mouth was humid and voluptuously slack. A line of silken down, hardly perceptible except in some lights, cast a perpetual shadow on her lips, and accentuated the flare of her nostrils, in which silken hairs also grew. Her hips were rounded and beautifully cushioned. Andrew turned toward the door, and then paused.

"What makes you treat me like a nice dog?" he asked. His voice, muffled behind his hand, was cloudy, and difficult to understand.

Hallie spoke calmly, with almost no movement of her lips. "I hate you more every time I see you!—I wouldn't let you touch me if you were the last man in the world!" In the wedge of light, the muscles in Andrew's arms stood out. Then he closed his eyes, not daring to answer. But Hallie looked at him without pity, her lips turned down in disgust, her eyes as hard and as undecided as the eyes of a water snake, until Andrew took a step toward her, his head lowered humbly. "Hallie!" he said; "don't talk that a-way, baby . . ."

Then Hallie, with a gesture of displeasure, walked to the door. She seated herself on the step, and watched the road. For a time Andrew remained in the room, looking at her, before he put on his coat, and walked to the barn.

The noonday heat lay close on the blossoming cotton. Waves of refracted light shimmered upward from the fields toward a horizon that seemed to waver and collapse and re-form itself before your eyes. Around him was the garden that Hallie cultivated. Phlox, larkspur and cockscomb were blooming in beds. Crepe-myrtle trees, as high as the house they guarded, lined one side of the fence, and made an impenetrable hedge. He stooped and pinched off, with his thumb, a salmon colored moss-flower, and stood picking it to pieces, as he leaned against the fence. Then he opened the gate, and carefully closed it behind him. The heat was all about him, and from the Reedyville road, to the left, clouds of red dust rose at intervals, as people drove past to Gramlings store. He stood idly by the gate, his eyes half closed in the bright glare, and surveyed the familiar scene.

As he entered the barn a mixed smell of ammonia, corn fodder and overripe sandpears, reached his nostrils. Then Babe, Brad's old mare, trotted over to him, at the sound of his step, and rubbed her nose against his sleeve, smelling him. Babe had become fat in her senescence, and her coat was turning gray in patches. And so Andrew stood there in the quiet barn, stroking her flanks and talking to her softly . . . He remembered when his father had bought Babe as a surprise for Brad's fifteenth birthday. Andrew calculated slowly: That was twenty years ago. It did not seem that long. He remembered how proud Brad had been of his present, and how he had permitted his two younger brothers to ride, also. He remembered Jim, a boy of six in those days, clinging to her sides with his lanky legs until the colt had bolted and thrown him into the watering trough. How they had all laughed! . . . But Jim had insisted, despite his mother's protests, on riding again, and that time he had remained seated. Jim had been the hero of the day: Indeed, he had almost taken the birthday away from Brad, and made it his own. Everybody had praised Jim and made a lot over him . . .

He remembered, also, his father, genial with corn whiskey, laughing and telling jokes, one arm resting around Bradford and the other around Jim. As Andrew recalled these old things, an eager look came into his eyes. He put his arms around Babe, and whispered to her, but his breath tickled her ears, and she jerked up her head sharply . . . "You remember Jim, don't you?" he asked . . . "You still remember Jim?" Then he began to feel sad because these things were part of a remembered past that could not live again. Effie, the oldest of the Tallon children, had married Asa Cleaver that year. She and Asa had just settled in their new home, but they had driven over for Brad's birthday, and for the celebration later. . . . So many things had changed in twenty years! Effie had grown children of her own now, and even Susan, the baby of the family, had married Carl Graffenreid and moved west to Oklahoma with him. And all that remained of loud-mouthed, good-natured Bradford Tallon was a citation, in flaming colors, signed by a French general, whose name could not be read. . . .

Andrew led the mare into the sunlight, guided her between the shafts of the buggy, and stood adjusting the harness. This weekly trip to Gramlings was the only work Babe did now, and she looked forward to it.

When Andrew finished his work, he raised his eyes and looked at the road, vibrating in the heat, and at the puffs of red dust, like blown smoke, which rose under the hoofs of the teams and settled above the crepe myrtle trees, turning their leaves red. Then he saw a battered automobile, badly

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in need of paint, with its top missing, turn in from the road, and approach the house through the groves of oaks. The car was a quarter of a mile away, but even at that distance he had recognized his sister, Effie, and her husband, Asa Cleaver. Hallie was still seated by the steps, staring at nothing at all, but when she, too, saw that guests were approaching, she got up hurriedly, and went into the house. Andrew led Babe into the shade and tied her to a ring. Then he walked to the gate and swung it wide, as the automobile came through the grove and into the yard.

The three youngest of the Cleaver children were out of the car before it had stopped rolling. They sprang for their uncle and threw their arms around his legs and his neck. Andrew shook them off, laughingly.

"Gloria Swanson!—don't jump up on your uncle Andrew that a-way: you'll muss his Sunday suit all up!—I'm ashamed of you, a big girl, almost nine years old!" Effie Cleaver's voice was habitually patient. She was a huge, shapeless woman. Her teeth were bad, black and decayed, and her neck and cheeks were splayed with black moles, no larger than bird shot. When she had been a young, slim girl, the moles had been considered beautiful; now they seemed affected, and somewhat silly. As she sat in the front seat with her husband, she crowded him against the side of the car, her bulk flowing under the steering wheel and pressing against his flanks.

Asa Cleaver spoke up: "Let the kids alone, Effie,—they ain't worrying their Uncle Andrew none."

Andrew had caught up the baby, Lessie May, affectionately, and was tossing her into the air, and catching her in his arms, pretending each time to let her drop. Lessie May screamed with delight and clung to his neck.

"Catch me!" demanded Gloria Swanson. "Catch me that a-way Uncle Andrew!"

But Andrew laughed and shook his head. "You're too big," he explained.

Gloria Swanson was a homely child, with pale eyes, and a harshly modeled nose. She stood staring at her uncle sullenly. Suddenly she lifted her lip with one finger and squeezed the fold backward in a pucker. . . . "Hoo hoo higg!" she grunted. . . . "Hoo hoo higg!" . . .

Effie and Asa both laughed outright, in spite of themselves. They had expected Andrew to laugh, also: After all Gloria Swanson was just a child, and couldn't be responsible, but Andrew did nothing of the kind: He braced himself quickly, as if he had been struck, and his hand jerked upward, automatically, and covered his scarred lips. . . . "Hoo hoo higg!" said Gloria Swanson, elated at her success, "hoo hoo higg!" Then Andrew put Lessie May down quietly, and walked away. Effie turned to her

daughter: "I'll take care of you, miss, when I get you home. You ought to be ashamed to mock your Uncle Andrew . . . Do you think he can help talking that way?" Then she gave her daughter a slap that resounded through the still afternoon.

Effie walked toward the house, her fat legs spread apart, her children and her husband following behind her. When they reached the steps, Hallie came out to greet her visitors. She had changed her dress, and combed out her hair. Effie waddled over to her and the two women kissed. Effie had never admired her sister-in-law, but since her marriage to Jim, she felt the Tallon family owed her something, in recompense for the shame Jim had cast on her. Andrew brought chairs from the house, and presently the Cleavers were seated on the porch. Only Asa refused the rocking chair that was offered him. He was chewing tobacco, he said, so it would be handier for him to sit on the porch steps, where he could spit without disturbing the rest of the party.

Effie had started talking immediately. She had just got a letter from Susan and Carl Graffenreid. They were expecting another baby: That made two for them in two years . . . Anyway, they liked Oklahoma, and Carl was doing well. "You remember Suse, don't you Hallie?" asked Effie, "or was she married before your pa moved this way?"

"I didn't know her real well," said Hallie, "but I met her a time or two. I went to her wedding that night: she made a pretty bride, I thought." Then she added, as if to herself: "Jim stood up with his sister, remember?"

There was a complete silence for a moment. "Hasn't anybody heard from Jim, since he left?" asked Asa Cleaver.

Hallie shook her head. "He hasn't written to me or Andrew. If he's written at all, it's been to somebody else."

"Jim's not acting right," said Effie. "I was over at the Cornells to a missionary social last week. They were all talking about Jim and Hallie, when I came in: Of course they changed the subject quick enough, but I wasn't fooled. After awhile that skinny Ellen Waters—you know her, Andrew: she was one of the Tarleton girls,—said to me, as innocent as you please: 'Have you heard from your brother Jim since he run off and quit his wife?' I said: 'I haven't heard from him, but I'm sure his wife has heard'. Then May Barrascale looked up and said no, that wasn't true. She said the postmistress at Hodgetown had told her that nobody had got a letter from Jim since he went away: She said she knew Jim Tallon's handwriting as well as her own. If a letter had come through, she'd have recognized the backing on it, she said.

Hallie looked toward the road, her face calm and without expression.

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"He hasn't wrote to me," she said; "but I didn't expect him to write to me." Effie reached out and took her hand. "Now, Hallie, don't think so hard of Jim. I know he hasn't treated you right, but Jim was always peculiar, and not like other people.

"I haven't got any hard feelings against Jim," said Hallie in a voice scarcely audible.

"It may sound silly of me to say it," continued Effie, "but Jim always seemed sort of alone and pitiful to me, in spite of his good looks, and the way people made over him."

"Jim didn't keer for many people," said Asa thoughtfully.

"I know that, now," said Hallie.

"Mamma used to say that Jim didn't care about anybody in the whole world except *Andrew*!" Effie paused and nodded her head, then, realizing that her words were unkind, she reached out and took Hallie's hand in her own. "Of course, Jim hadn't met up with *you* when Mamma said what she did," explained Effie.

Hallie shook her head positively: "Jim never cared anything about me at all. I tried to think he did, but I knew I was lying. I knew it the night he married me.—I haven't got anybody to blame but myself, I guess."

"Oh, I'm sure you're wrong," said Effie. "If Jim hadn't loved you, he wouldn't a-wanted to marry you, would he?"

A puzzled expression came over Hallie's face. She spoke in her tiny voice, with hardly a movement of her lips, as if she were a ventriloquist's dummy. "I never figgered out yet why Jim did marry me."

Asa spat into a flower bed patterned like a star, in which marigolds were blooming. "Jim ought not to act the way he is, causing people to talk!" Then he shrugged his thin shoulders: "Well, I guess if folks didn't have Jim and Hallie to talk about, they'd talk about somebody else: Folks in Pearl County just can't mind their own business . . . I was talking to Mr. Johnny Everett, who keeps books for the Hodges, and he stopped me and asked about Jim. It seems the mill still owes Jim a week's pay. Jim didn't get his money when the rest of the hands were paid off that Saturday afternoon: He asked Mr. Everett to hold the money for him for a few days, and Mr. Johnnie said all right, he would, but Jim never come back for it."

"Well, now," said Effie, "that does seem right funny, don't it?"

"There were two or three people around when Mr. Johnny was talking to me, and they heerd what all he said. Mr. Dolan, the commissary manager, said it looked to him like Jim had made up his mind to new home, but they had driven over for Brad's birthday, and for the cele-

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bration later So many things had changed in twenty years! Effie had grown children of her own, now and even Susan, the baby of the family had married Carl Graffenreid and moved west to Oklahoma with him. And all that remained of loud-mouthed, good-natured Bradford Tallon was a citation, in flaming colors, signed by a French general, whose name could not be read

Andrew led the mare into the sunlight, guided her between the shafts of the buggy, and stood adjusting the harness. This weekly trip to Gramlings was the only work Babe did now, and she looked forward to it. As Andrew harnessed her, she kept turning her head and sniffing his shirt. Being blind, she wanted assurance that she had not fallen among aliens, and being old, she felt the necessity of affection.

When Andrew finished his work, he raised his eyes and looked at the road, vibrating in the heat, and at the puffs of red dust, like blown smoke, which rose under the hoofs of the teams and settled above the crepe myrtle trees, turning their leaves red. Then he saw a battered automobile, badly run away, all right, and was cacheing the money until he was ready to go. Mr. Everett said yes, he figgered that, too, but after going to all that trouble, why would Jim up and leave his money at the last minute?"

"Then Mr. Dolan laughed and said: 'Well, I guess nobody could rightly tell what Jim Tallon was going to do at any one time!'—Mr. Johnny laughed, too, and said: 'Look out, that's Jim Tallon's brother-in-law you're talking to,' . . . Mr. Dolan laughed, himself, and said he'd bet I'd agree with him, at that, and I said yes, I guessed he was right. Mr. Everett said maybe so, but Mr. Russell Hodge couldn't quit worrying about Jim. He said Jim was a better saw-filer drunk than anybody else was sober, and if he wanted to come back and take his old job, it was his for the asking: He said tell him that, iffen we knowed where to write him at. He said tell him about the money, too, and where should they send it . . . I said my family hadn't heerd from Jim, but maybe Hallie and Andrew had heerd." Asa took a clean, blue handkerchief from his pocket and wiped his lips. "Mr. Russell Hodge thought right smart of Jim," said Andrew reminiscently.

Asa nodded his head in assent and Effie rocked back and forth, and fanned herself with a palmetto fan. Perspiration rolled down her cheeks, and lay undrained between the ridges of her flesh. Effie wore her hair piled high on her head. At the nape of her neck, tendrils of her damp hair, black, with reddish lights in it, curled moistly against her parboiled skin. . . . "It does seem funny about Jim going away and leaving his money," she said, as if emerging from deep thought. "That does seem funny to me, Hallie."

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The Cleaver children were playing in the oakgrove by the gate. They had gathered pieces of broken crockery and tin cans, and Bud was keeping store. Their shrill voices, as they argued excitedly, could be plainly heard. Andrew got up from his chair: "Got to be gettin' on to town," he said. Asa rose also, and said with exaggerated carelessness: "I'll walk as far as the barn and look at your stock." Then he put one hand against his cheek, shielding his eyes from the women, and winked.

At forty-four Asa considered himself an old man. His hands were stiff from years of toil, and his bones seemed improperly articulated, as if they had been assembled by inept hands. He had become bald early in life, but as if to compensate him for that loss, his brows were two thick lines that met above his nose, and stray hairs grew lushly from the cave of his ears. His nose was curved with sudden harshness, but the lower part of his face was inoffensive, and somewhat pathetic.

As the two men walked away from the house, Asa kept up a steady flow of conversation concerning crops, hard times and the price of fertilizers, but Andrew was hardly conscious that he was talking. He walked with his head lowered, busy with his thoughts, paying little attention to his brother-in-law.

The men passed back of the barn, and when they were screened from the house, Asa stopped before a pecan tree which had never borne fruit. "I been wanting to do this ever since I left home," he said, "but I didn't have no chance to get away from the women folks before." Afterwards, to give color to his excuse, he and Andrew walked past the barn and down to the fields, in the direction of the creek, and Asa paused occasionally, to pick a fresh green leaf, and to examine it against the sun. The cotton was delicately blooming, cream and pink, but the young bolls had not yet formed. Then, suddenly, Asa stopped in surprise. Before him stretched a bare patch, with last years dry stalks drooping and withered beside the vigorous growth that surrounded it. The unploughed patch was near the creek, in the center of the Tallon fields, and Asa stood in his tracks and surveyed it, a puzzled questioning expression on his face, before he spoke: "How come you didn't plough under them old stalks?" he asked. "How come you planted only a part of the Delta Patch this year?"

Andrew looked at him calmly, as if prepared for the question. "That field's about wore out," he said. "Thought I'd let it rest for a spell."

Asa opened his pocket knife and cut a sliver from the fence, shaping it slowly into a tooth pick. He glanced at Andrew shrewdly, beneath his black, shelf-like brows, his hooked nose pulled downward. The field, of which the unploughed patch was a part, was so famous in Pearl County

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for its fertility, that it had a name of its own, "Tallon's Delta Field," a name which individualized it, and separated it from less fertile land. It lay in the bed of some old stream, once tributary to Pearl River, and its soil was rich and sweet. Andrew's statement that it was worn out, was a lie, of course. Asa didn't believe that for a minute!—If Andrew was going to lie, he might have thought of a better one than that! He stood examining Andrew's face shrewdly, with new interest, mystified suddenly. But Andrew ignored his brother-in-law, continuing to look at his vigorously growing cotton, at its grayish-green leaves, and its flowers which shaded from cream to delicate pink. . . . His face was impassive.

When Asa had whittled his tooth pick, he inserted it between his stained teeth and sucked at the morsels of food which had lodged there. "Has it got anything to do with trap patchin' for weevil?" he asked after a long time.

Andrew shook his head.

"Your cotton hasn't got weevil, has it?" insisted Asa.

"No," said Andrew.

"If it's weevil, it ain't right not to tell folks hereabouts, before it's too late."

"It ain't weevil," said Andrew. Then his face became red and angry. "That's my land!" he shouted in his grunting, labored voice. "Iffen I don't choose to plough it, that's my business, by God!"

Asa looked at him quickly, surprised at his vehemence. "There ain't no call to get mad at me," he said mildly. . . . "Iffen you got weevil in your fields, that ain't your fault!—I never *said* it was your fault, Andrew: I just said the other farmers ought to know about it."

"I got to be getting on to town," said Andrew.

He walked back to the house with long strides, his head lowered angrily, and unhitched old Babe. Asa followed him, and stood holding the gate open, and as Andrew drove through, he said: "There's no call for you to be a-gettin' mad at *me*."

"I ain't mad at you," said Andrew.

Then he drove through the grove of oaks and turned into the Reedyville Road. But Asa stood by the gate watching him for a long time, chewing on his tooth pick. "Andrew's found weevil in his cotton, as sure as you're a foot high!" he said to himself. Then he shook his head, as if denying his words: "Never seen anybody trap patch that way before, though. . . ."

Once on the road, Andrew relaxed in his seat, and old Babe jogged through the red dust, her bowels making a subterranean sound like blurred

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echoes in a vault. The sun beat fiercely on the road and the wheels of the buggy threw into the air geysers of hot sand. To the left and to the right of the road stretched acres of stumps, charred and mutilated, between which second growth pine and scrub oaks had sprung up. When Andrew and Jim had been boys, the road had run through the virgin forest. That was before the Hodge brothers had built their sawmill on Pearl River, and had bought the timber from old man Lemuel Tallon, the father of the boys. Andrew took out his clean handkerchief and wiped his neck and face. He was curiously preoccupied with the past this afternoon. He could not shake the power of the past from him. . . . That was because of Effie, and her unending talk of the old times. . . .

And so as old Babe jogged leisurely down the road, Andrew remembered a time, years ago, when he and Jim had hunted rabbit through this same demolished grove. That was the afternoon his father had concluded the sale of his timber to the Hodge brothers. The boys had returned home at sunset, tired and hungry, and had both gone down to the creek to swim before supper. They had emerged clean and refreshed, and had run a foot race from the creek to the house. When they drew near it, they heard their father and their brother Bradford singing drunken songs, and laughing loudly in celebration of the sale of the timber.

Andrew entered the house first. He saw that Mr. Russell and Mr. Thompson Hodge were there also. They were not twins, but they dressed, and looked, exactly alike. Each wore a gold signet ring on his little finger, and each had a heavy gold chain, with a Masonic emblem, hanging across his vest. They were short, stocky men, shrewd traders, and very kindly. There was much banter back and forth as to whom had got the better of the trade. Russell Hodge was seated in a rocking chair, holding Susan in his arms. She was laughing and clapping her hands, and trying to plait his moustache.

"I'll bet you're going to be a little beauty, when you grow up," said Thompson Hodge. "I'll bet you won't sit in Russell's lap in a few years from now."

"I will, too," said Susan quickly; "I will, too, iffen Mr. Russell asks me."

Old man Lem Tallon roared with laughter, and so did the Hodge brothers. "Mamma!" called Bradford, "did you hear what Suse said to Mr. Thompson Hodge?"

"No," said Mrs. Tallon, "but I know it must a-been saucy.—Suse, you better be a good girl now, or I'll send you to bed without ere a bite of supper."

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"I ain't done nothing, ma," said Susan, her eyes wide with their innocence.

"Oh, leave her alone, ma," said Brad. Then he picked up his mother in his powerful arms, and hugged her to him. "What you say, Suse?" he asked; "let's you and me change things around.—Ma's been a-pickin' on us two long enough: Let's spank ma, and put *her* to bed withouten supper!" Susan gasped with delight and fear. "O-o-o-o!" she said in a long terrified gasp. . . . "O-o-o-o-o!—Brad!"

Old man Lemuel Tallon stretched himself out in his chair helplessly, holding his sides until he was weak with laughter. . . . "What chillun I raised!" he gasped . . . "What chillun! What chillun!—Folks said when Bradford was just a puppy that we ought to drown him . . . Said we'd be better off, iffen we done that!"

Mrs. Tallon began to laugh too. "Put me down, Bradford," she said severely. "You're not too big for me to handle yet, young man!" Then Bradford lowered his mother to the floor, and kissed her resoundingly on both cheeks, but she began to scold him and hit at him with her dish cloth, half playfully, half in earnest. Never, as long as she lived, would she feel at home with these huge, playful Tallons.

Jim Tallon had not entered the room. He stood watching the scene gravely from the door, but Andrew had pressed up to his father, and was giggling with delight, his mouth opened, and his deformed lip stretched wide. Old man Tallon pretended not to see him. He got up from his chair and came over to Jim, putting his arms about him proudly. "Shake hands with Mr. Thompson and Mr. Russell Hodge," he said. Jim went over to the strangers and greeted them solemnly.

"Well, you're a fine boy," said Mr. Russell. "How old are you?"

"I'm eleven years old," said Jim. Then he added, "My brother Andrew is twelve, though.

He turned to look for Andrew, but Andrew had moved again, following his father like a shadow. He stood again by the door, twisting his foot and acting like a yokel embarrassed in the presence of his betters. Presently his father, as if understanding this, and resenting it, turned again and indicated Andrew with his finger. "This is my other boy," he said. "He's the afflicted one."

Mrs. Tallon came up quickly. She was a small, worried woman, with masses of faded, yellowish hair which seemed too heavy for her delicate bones. "Go outside and play, Andrew!" she said. "You, too, Jim.—Go out with your brother!" Jim walked out of the room quickly, but Andrew stood there grinning, his irregular, half-formed teeth gleaming bone-like under the cleft in his lip. "Go shake hands with Mr. Thompson and Mr.

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Russell," said Lem Tallon. "Where are your manners at, son?" Andrew began to laugh nervously, but he did not move.

"Andrew!" said Mrs. Tallon.—"Andrew, go outside with Jim!"

But Andrew could not draw his fascinated eyes from his father's face. Lem Tallon, in his jovial moments was entirely familiar to Andrew. He knew that his mother was trying to protect him, that he should go outside quickly and avoid the scene that awaited him, but he was powerless to move. He stood there nervously waiting for his father to humiliate him before these strangers.

"Oh, let the boy stay, Reina, iffen he wants to," said Lem . . . "I want him to sing a song for Mr. Thompson and Mr. Russell." Then, turning to the Hodge brothers, he said: "You'll die laughing at the way that boy sings: It's funnier than ere a tent show you ever seen."

"Now, Lemuel"—began Mrs. Tallon. Then she stopped helplessly.

"Come on, son," said old man Tallon. "Sing a song for our company."

"Don't know ere a song to sing," said Andrew.

"Make him sing 'Captain, Captain tell me true'—said Bradford. "Make him sing that song, pa."

Old Lemuel Tallon began to laugh loudly. "That's right," he said. "That's a good one!"—Then, to the Hodges: "You'll bust out laughing sure, when you hear him. . . ."

Then Andrew stood in the center of the room, lifted his head and began to sing:

"Oh Captain, Captain tell me true,
Does my sweet Willie sail with you?"

His breath moving against his shattered palate made a hollow, unreal sound, and came distorted and blurred through his mutilated mouth. His face was pale and shamed, and there was a sick, pleading look in his eyes.

"Oh, no, he does not sail with me,
For he is on the deep blue sea . . ."

At the end of each stanza, old man Tallon and Bradford would slap their legs, and laugh drunkenly, or join in the last line, but Mrs. Tallon stood alone by the door, her hands wrapped in her apron, and shook her head. Her lips kept forming the words, "no!" . . . "no!" but she remained silent.

Finally the song was finished, and at its last words, Mrs. Tallon came up quickly, standing between her son and his father. "I know the Hodge brothers want to freshen up before supper," she said. She turned to Andrew and gave him a shove that his father did not see. "Run down and pump a bucket of water," she said. . . . But Andrew stood with his

shamed face, as if he had not heard her. Something within him held him rigid, and helpless. He was powerless to move until his father's voice released him.

"Do what your ma tells you, Andrew!" said Lemuel Tallon.

Andrew turned then, and ran out of the room. When he reached the porch, he took the bucket and walked toward the well. Jim was standing by the steps, waiting.

"Jim!" said Andrew, "what's the matter?"

Jim walked toward him. He was trembling with rage. "Iffen he makes you do that again, I'm a-goin' to kill him!" he said.

Andrew stood with his head lowered, swinging the bucket to and fro. "Pa don't mean no harm," he said. "He wouldn't a-done it, iffien he hadn't been drinkin'." Then he walked away, Jim behind him.

"Why don't you stay away from him?" demanded Jim. "Why don't you keep out of his sight?"

"I don't know," said Andrew.

They had reached the well and Andrew lowered the bucket with a splash, and drew it up again. "I'll kill him!" said Jim passionately; "Him and Brad too!" . . .

"I don't mind," said Andrew; "I don't keer what he makes me do." He leaned against the well, his face sick and white. Then he began to laugh, in spite of himself. "I guess I do sound funny," he said.

Then some obscure impulse which he did not understand, and which he had not calculated, made him put down the bucket and stand there looking at his brother. There was a warm feeling of blood in his throat, and around his heart. "So long as you and ma don't laugh at me, I don't keer what other people do!" he said in a voice scarcely audible. And Jim walked to his brother irresistibly, as if propelled by a hand, his arms outstretched, his fine, delicate nostrils quivering. . . .

"Andrew!" called his mother from the porch. "Hurry with that water, son!"

"Yes, ma'am," said Andrew in his piglike, grunting voice. "Yes, ma'am, I'm acomin' now."

So preoccupied was Andrew with these thoughts of the past that he did not realize that Babe, missing his guiding hand, had stopped, and pulled to the left of the road. She kept twitching her hide to the ghostlike, orchestral accompaniment of her bowels, and stretching out her neck toward the dusty grass which grew by the roadside. Andrew sat up suddenly, and shook his head, as if to dispel these old, unbidden memories. Since Jim's disappearance, he had thought of the past a great deal, trying,

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in the labyrinth of his memory, to discover a clue for Jim's behavior, and his own, and not succeeding. Involuntarily he spoke aloud: "What makes everything so mixed up?" he asked. . . .

At his words old Babe hunched her shoulders forward, and pulled toward the road, but Andrew touched the reins lightly, and she stopped again. Suddenly he realized that he did not want to go to Gramlings that afternoon. Everybody in the county would be there, buying their supplies and exchanging gossip. He did not want to see people. He wanted to be alone.

At one time he had looked forward to these trips to the store. After a week of work on the farm, he had enjoyed meeting his friends, spending an entire afternoon sitting lazily on the porch of the store, listening to the news of the county, and, sometimes, even taking a share in the talk. To him, now, these days seemed part of a remote past. That was before Neil Barrows had moved his family to Hodgetown and he had met Hallie. It would never have occurred to Andrew, in those days, that his cleft lip, with its flash of bone beneath, would, one day, frustrate his manhood, and that, because of it, a person would turn away from him in disgust. This he was to learn later.

Two years before the June afternoon of which I write, Neil Barrows had come to Pearl County as millwright for the Hodge brothers. The following spring he had moved his family from their old home in Georgia and they went to live in one of the company houses, in Hodgetown. There were nine of the Barrows children, but Hallie was the oldest of the lot, and, at eighteen, she was a slow, strongly built girl, with vigorous breasts and growths of faint black hair on her arms and legs. At first she was homesick in her new surroundings, and she cried a great deal over the friends she had left behind her in Georgia, but gradually she began to meet people, and to become part of the community. Among the first people she met was Andrew Tallon, and this is the way it came about:

Mrs. Ed Wren was giving a singing and a dance at her place on Green Creek, near Morgantown, and the Wednesday before she saw Hallie Barrows at prayer meeting. As a rule Mrs. Wrenn did not like the new people that the saw mill had brought into the county: The saw mill with its noise and energy meant change, and a passing of the old security she had come to feel necessary, but she was sorry for this handsome, high-colored girl who sat sullenly apparently acquainted with nobody. At the end of the meeting, Mrs. Wrenn came up to her.

"You're Mr. Neil Barrow's daughter, ain't you?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am," said Hallie in her small voice, her words uttered with hardly any movement of her lips.

"I'm Mrs. Addie Wrenn—Ed Wrenn's wife. Mr. Wrenn and me are having a singing and a dance at our place next Saturday night in honor of our daughter, back home on a visit. We'd be mighty glad to have you come and meet some of the young folks, iffen you want to."

Hallie stood there looking at her, a defensive expression on her face. Finally she spoke. "I'll be mighty proud to come."

Mrs. Wrenn nodded her head. She was a small, wasplike woman with thin, sandy hair that was turning gray. She wore starched collars about her neck, and there were circular gold earrings in her ears. Her mouth was lipless—a small, compressed dash on her face. From it, thread-like lines radiated, like marks around a child's drawing of the sun. She stood resting her hand on Hallie's vigorous forearm. "Mr. Wrenn and me will be glad to give you the welcome of our home," she said with nicety.

Hallie lowered her eyes suddenly, the anticipation expiring. "I guess I can't come, after all," she said. Then, in explanation of her refusal: "Don't know nobody to bring me." . . .

"Oh!" said Mrs. Wrenn lightly, "Oh!—is *that* all that's a-keepin' you away?—Well,—Well, now we'll fix that pretty quick." She laughed the frail laugh that one would expect from a marble angel guarding a grave. Then she looked about her. At the steps of the church stood Andrew Tallon with his sister Suse, and her sweetheart, Carl Graffenreid. . . . "Andrew!" she called—"You, Andrew!—come here a minute!—I got somebody I want you to meet."

"No," said Hallie, as if ashamed, "I can't be *asking* him to take me."

"Oh, shucks!" said Mrs. Wrenn, "I've knowed Andrew since he was born. His ma and me were girls together."

Andrew came over sheepishly, somewhat embarrassed. He had turned twenty-five, the month before, and he had reached his full measure of vigor. His body, as he walked, flared out so strongly that even the cheap, ill-fitting mail-order suit he wore could not hide its magnificence. Mrs. Wrenn performed the introductions primly, and Hallie looked, for the first time, into Andrew's face, at his angrily cleft lip and its flash of bone white teeth beneath. She was conscious of her rudeness, but she could not withdraw her eyes.

"I want you young people to meet each other," said Mrs. Wrenn. "I'm having a party and a singing next Saturday night. I just asked Miss Hallie to come, and I was aimin' to ask you, too, Andrew."

"Yes, ma'am," said Andrew, "I'll be proud to come."

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At the sound of his voice, Hallie unconsciously shuddered and drew back a step. Then Andrew's neck and his face turned red, and, for the first time in his life, he raised his hand and covered his mouth with the gesture that was to become habitual with him.

"I hope Miss Hallie will give me the pleasure of her company," he said with elaborate stiffness.

Hallie looked at the floor. "I'll be glad to go with you, if you're sure it ain't putting you out none," she said. Then she turned her head away.

"Well, that's all fixed," said Mrs. Wrenn cheerfully. She turned, calling to Susan and Carl. They came over and joined the group, and Mrs. Wrenn introduced Hallie to them. She explained again about the party and asked them to come, reminding them, particularly, to tell Jim that she would be expecting him, also.

Then she turned to Carl Graffenreid: "I declare, Carl, you ought to be ashamed to take Suse away out there in Oklahoma, off from civilization, and everything."

Susan began to laugh. "I don't mind going, Miss Addie," she said. "I think Oklahoma is going to be real nice."

"You're getting a fine, sweet girl, for a wife, Carl," said Mrs. Wrenn. "I hope you realize that!"

"Yes'm," said Carl. "Guess I do."

Suse Tallon turned to go. "Well, good-bye, Miss Addie. Come over and see me some day soon. I want you to tell me how to make Carl step around."

Mrs. Wrenn laughed remotely. "I sure will, Suse," she said. "I'll come over just as soon as my daughter goes back. We'll have a long talk."

Later, on the road home, Suse spoke to her brother. "What's the matter, Andrew?—You haven't spoke a word since we left prayer-meeting."

Andrew grunted in his blurred voice, but he did not answer. He was already thinking of Hallie Barrows as his wife, and was picturing, in his mind's eye, the happiness of a life spent with her. A deep sense of the richness and the beauty of life flowed through him like a current. "She's so purty," he kept whispering to himself.

After the Hodge brothers had built their sawmill, they had laid out a town, and had built a series of frame dwellings for the use of their workmen. At first Hodgetown had been hideous with its gingerbread woodwork and its yellow paint, but years of weather had toned it down. The streets had been named by Mrs. Thompson Hodge for what she, at

least, believed to be Indian tribes, and the houses were grouped, in accordance with the importance of their occupants, with a military niceness of distinction. On Calumet Avenue, a short street which ran diagonally to the rest of the town, lived Mr. Russell Hodge in a white house with gray trimmings, and adjoining him lived his brother Thompson in a gray house with white trimmings. The fact that these two houses were not painted in accordance with the general pattern of the town, gave the owners a certain distinction.

Adjoining the Hodges, lived T. L. Dolan, manager of the company commissary, then in the following order, came the residences of Sam Newson, woods superintendent, Regis Batty, foreman of the planing mill and John Everett, auditor for the corporation.

At the very end of the street Neil Barrows and his numerous family lived in a rambling, two storey house. From the rear of this house you could see the log-pond, with pine logs, like fallen giants, inert in the stagnant water.

On the night of Mrs. Wrenn's party, Andrew Tallon drove up to the Barrow's gate in his new automobile, of which he was very proud. Hallie was waiting for him on the porch, fidgeting nervously in the swing. Her parents were also there on the porch, and they looked politely at this powerful, mutilated young man who had come to court their daughter. Neil Barrows got up and shook hands. "I know your brother, Jim," he said. "He's saw filer for the Hodges."

"Yes, sir," grunted Andrew.

"I guess Jim'd ruther work at the mill than to farm," said Neil Barrows with an effort at joviality.

"Yes, sir," said Andrew, somewhat embarrassed, "I guess he would." Then he added: "Mr. Russell had taken a liking to Jim when he was just a boy. Said he wanted to bring Jim up to be an A No. 1 sawmill man."

"I guess you and Hallie better be gettin' to the party," said Mrs. Barrows, "that is iffen you want to hear some of the singin'."

Then they both rose and bowed and Hallie and Andrew went down the walk, to the road. The spring breeze brought to their nostrils the musty smell of the log pond, like snuff blended with vanilla. Farther off they could hear the noise the water made as it flowed over the dam and broke with a hiss on the piling below.

"They used to call that place Hurry's Lake," said Andrew indicating the mill pond. "Jim and me and the Barrascale boys used to go fishing there when we were little."

"Oh!" said Hallie.—"Well, I don't think there's ere a fish in it now."

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"No," said Andrew; "I guess there ain't."

They turned out of Calumet Avenue into Hiawatha Street, and approached the State road. Before them was the slab pit in which was burned the refuse from the mill. Its light cast a perpetual red glare in the eastern sky, and was reflected in the dark water of the pond. They both looked at the pit for a moment. Then they moved in jerks down the uneven road, speaking rarely, and then only about their health or the landscape.

When they arrived and parked in front of the Wrenns' place, it was late and the singing was almost done. So they sat outside in the moonlight, silent mostly, but talking at intervals. Then finally, the singing was over. Inside they could hear the sound of released merriment, and there was a scraping of chairs and furniture, as the room was cleared for dancing. Occasionally a furtive figure emerged from the circle of light, and stood behind a bush, a flask of corn whiskey raised to his lips, or a couple would walk out, their arms about each other, unconscious that they were observed.

Then Andrew saw his brother, Jim, come out of the house with Rafe Hall and the Cuterbridge boys. He called to him, and Jim, leaving his friends, came at once to the parked car. He shook hands with Hallie. "Andrew said you were purty," he remarked gaily. But Hallie could find no words. She raised her eyes and looked at his laughing face.

Jim resembled his mother's side of the family, and the touch of Spanish blood in her people had come strongly to the surface in him. His eyes were dark and they moved about with a restless languor. He was not so tall as his brother, nor was his figure cast in so heavy a mould, and yet there was some kinship which identified them immediately. He stood by the car, laughing a great deal, his face slightly flushed and his breath strong with the whiskey that he had been drinking.

Then Hallie, too, became gay. Her eyes sparkled and her listlessness vanished. "Let's go in and dance," she urged. Jim leaned against the automobile, rolling a cigarette, grinning pleasantly, but he did not offer to dance with her as she, vaguely, had anticipated. Instead, it was Andrew who came over and offered his arms. But suddenly Hallie's animation vanished. . . . "Don't!" she protested; "you'll muss up my dress!" . . .

Then she spoke to Jim, ignoring his brother: "Let's go inside and dance there."

"Sure," said Jim.—"Let's all go inside." He slapped his brother jovially on the back. "All I can say is, Andrew knows a fine girl when he sees one!" Andrew lowered his head and grinned happily, and then, in an excess of nervous excitement, he began punching Jim affectionately with his huge, hairy fists.

When they entered the Wrenn's house, the fiddlers were busy, scraping their instruments and keeping time with their pattering feet. Hallie stood between the two men, looking at Jim; but Jim took her hand and placed it in his brother's. "Go on and have your dance," he said; "don't let me interfere with your sweetheartin'!—But don't think you can get shed of me so easy, Miss Hallie: I'll be back for my dance next time!" . . .

Hallie looked deeply into his restless eyes and nodded her head, as if, already, there was an understanding between them, and as she waltzed with Andrew, she kept looking at Jim, following his figure with her eyes. When she saw him go up to May Barrascale and dance away with her, a feeling of defeat and rage came over her. But later, when she, herself, was dancing with him, she felt satisfied and at ease. After that, she passed from partner to partner rapidly, while Andrew stood by the door, ostensibly talking to Addie Wrenn, but, in reality, never letting Hallie out of his sight, a contented feeling of pride in his breast, as if he, and he alone, were responsible for her beauty and her popularity.

Later, when he was taking her home, they were both silent. All the fire and all the coquetry seemed to have gone out of Hallie. They pulled up before the Barrow's house, and Andrew parked his car under the trees. Hallie started to get out, but Andrew put his hand on her arm gently. "Don't go in yet awhile," he pleaded. Hallie looked at him uncertainly, and then sat back.

"I think you're the sweetest girl I ever seen," said Andrew.

Hallie remained silent, one hand on the door. She knew what was coming, but she was powerless to prevent it.

"What's the matter, honey?—You cold?"

Hallie shook her head.

Then Andrew put his arms around her and drew her to him, and Hallie made no effort to conceal her disgust. Quickly he bent over her, and kissed her on the lips. Hallie made a sound as if she were going to be sick. She pulled away from him furiously, and began wiping her lips with her sleeve.

"You! . . . You!" she said.

There was a confused, uncomprehending look in Andrew's face. . . . "I'm asking you to marry me," he said.

"You! . . . You!" said Hallie, but she could not get her sentence finished.

"I want you to marry me, Hallie," he kept repeating helplessly.

Jim was awake, waiting for him, when Andrew returned home that night. He listened, in silence, smoking a cigarette, while Andrew talked.

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"You better get over it," he said.—"What do you want to marry her for? . . . Don't go tying yourself up to a woman like that."

Andrew sat by the side of the bed, taking off his shoes slowly, his eyes blue and far away. He had not even heard his brother's words. . . . "She's so purty, Jim!" he said dreamily.

"I've seen purtier," said Jim. Then he began to yawn. "Come on—blow out that lamp, and let's get some sleep!—I got to get up early tomorrow, Sunday or no Sunday, and so have you."

"She's so purty, Jim!" said Andrew stupidly. "She's so—"

"All right!—All right!" said Jim. "But come on to bed, for Christ sake."

When the brothers were in bed, the light out, Andrew continued to talk. "I ain't got ere a chance with her, I guess."

Instantly Jim was alert. "Why not?" he asked. "She ought to be damned glad to get you, if you mean to ask me."

Andrew shook his head. He could not explain to his brother what he meant, but, in the dark, he raised his hand and touched his mutilated lip.

All that day Andrew went about dreamily, thinking of Hallie. In the afternoon, he called Tobey, his shepherd dog, and took a long walk through the woods. Later he stopped by the Cornells' place and sat for awhile talking to Sam and Horace, the unmarried sons. When he returned home, it was dark. Carl Graffenreid had come over for supper, and Suse busied herself about the table, serving the meal she had prepared.

"We don't eat like this when Carl ain't here," said Jim. "Don't let her fool you, Carl!—she'll feed you on beans and sow-belly after she's got you hooked."

"Why, Jim Tallon— I think that's real mean!" said Suse.

Carl grinned with embarrassment. "I don't keer much what Suse feeds me on," he said. Then he added: "I heerd today Andrew and Neil Barrow's daughter were keepin' company.—Guess Andrew'll be the next Tallon to get married: pretty soon won't be nobody left except Jim."

Andrew looked down at his plate. "I'll sure be the next one, if she'll have me," he said.

Susan put down a dish indignantly. "She'll have you, all right, and jump at the chance!"

"That's what I been trying to tell him," said Jim.

But Andrew shook his head doubtfully. "I don't know," he repeated in his grunting, labored voice.

"Oh, pshaw!" said Suse. "If you're really fixin' to marry Hallie Barrows, keep after her. What if she does say no a few times? Let her

say it. Keep after her. . . . Oh, you men!" she said, "you're just like babies when it comes to courtin'."

"I asked Suse a dozen times, I'll bet, before she said she would." Carl reached over and pinched her arm.

"Yes, and I'd a-made you ask me more'n that, too," said Suse, "but I was afraid to let you go off to Oklahoma amongst them right Indian squaws." Then she spoke to her brother. "Keep after her, Andrew!—Hallie ain't no different from any other girl."

As if acting upon his sister's advice, Andrew got out his automobile that night and called, formally, on Hallie. Mrs. Barrows answered his knock, and ushered him into the parlor. She was a powerful woman, like her daughter. There was a discontented look in her face and she sighed, at intervals, for no reason at all, as if she bore on her shoulders all the burdens of the world.

"Well," she said, "come in and sit down.—Hallie'll be surprised to see you."

Andrew entered self-consciously, his head lowered, bull-like, his huge powerful hands turning his hat over and over. When he came into the room, it was full of the younger Barrows children, Hallie's brothers and sisters. They stood gawking at him with fascination, openly. Then, one by one, they sidled, like fiddler-crabs, through a door that led to a recess in the rear, their slates and their school books gathered to their breasts, helter skelter.

Andrew sat on the stiff chair that was offered him and looked at the cheap, shoddily furnished room. Beyond the partition, he could hear the fine thread of Hallie's voice, annoyed, carrying through the blurred, rumble of her mother's speech, as if they argued some point fiercely, but the words of neither woman came to his ears clearly.

"Tell him I ain't here," Hallie was saying.—"I won't see that harelip again. I won't have him courtin' me!" . . .

"Now, honey," said her mother soothingly. "Mr. Tallon is a fine young man, everybody says. It's not right to hold his affliction against him."

"I won't have nothing to do with him!" said Hallie. "Tell him to go on away!"

But in the end she did see him. She came into the parlor dressed in her best, two circular spots of rouge on her cheeks, a fat, rather silly curl, twisted by her mother's finger, resting against her cheek.

They sat there silently, avoiding each others eyes. Then, after a time, Andrew spoke: "Jim said to give you his regards."

Hallie looked up, interested finally: "I thought he was a real hand-

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some man," she said, as if speaking to herself; "I thought he was the handsomest man ever I seen."

Andrew chuckled happily. "Well, I guess most everybody thinks that." Then he began to talk of Jim, of their early life together. Hallie sat forward in her chair, urging him to go on, when he seemed on the point of changing the conversation, asking him many questions about Jim: She wanted to know everything about him: What dishes he particularly relished, whether he liked light headed or dark headed girls; whether he liked them quiet, or bold.

It was eleven o'clock before Andrew knew it. Hallie walked with him to the parked automobile, and stood under the trees. In the distance the burning slab-pit was like a lost sunrise which lighted the wrong sky, and the sound of water breaking over the dam was as sustained and as faint as the beating wings of a bird. As Andrew stood at the door of the automobile, watching the tinted sky and listening to the sound of the water, he forgot his shyness and his self-consciousness: Everything except that he loved Hallie. Something told him that he should not touch her yet, that she would not welcome his advances, but he could not resist his desire, and so he took her in his arms and began to declare his love in his grotesque voice. But Hallie stood against him like an empty sack, unresistant as wood, and as unresponsive. Words came rushing out of Andrew: all the things he had thought of, but had never dared express, and Hallie waited quietly until he had finished: then she pulled away from his embrace abruptly, no longer able to hide her disgust, turned, and entered her home without a word.

But Andrew, despite Hallie's discouraging attitude, continued to hope. He called upon her regularly thereafter, twice a week. They went to singings and picnics together; occasionally they drove over to Reedyville to attend the movies. The whole county knew of the affair, and laughed about it, but they all predicted that Andrew's silent persistence would triumph in the end.

Carl Graffenreid and Susan Tallon were married in late May. Effie Cleaver came over the morning before, and, with the assistance of Andrew and Jim, she decorated the house with green vines and flowers. They moved the furniture from the parlor and the bedrooms, and stored it temporarily in the barn. Then, in the hall, Andrew built an altar which Effie draped with tulle and decked with flowers. Carl came over also, but Effie and Suse would not let him help. He stood around miserably, a strained grin on his freckled face, listened to Effie's good-counsel and to Jim's banter.

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Later, Andrew dressed and went for Hallie. She had bought a new frock for the occasion, a silk dress which was green, if you looked at it one way, and pink if you regarded it from another angle. She had rouged her lips heavily, in the manner of moving picture actresses. They stood together in the crowded room waiting for the ceremony to begin. At last everything was ready and Bessie Tarleton began to sing.

Then, somehow, Carl Graffenreid was standing by the altar with Herb Outerbridge, his best man, waiting for his bride. Suse had determined to do the wedding properly. She entered in white, a silk veil trailing behind her, supported on the arm of her brother, Jim. Before them walked Essie May Cleaver, scattering flowers: Essie May tricked out, and uncomfortable, in pink muslin with a bow of ribbon in her limp hair. Effie Cleaver stood in the doorway, more concerned about the success of her daughter than the wedding of her sister. Effie's cheeks were brick-red with her excitement and the archipelago of black moles looked as if somebody had dotted her face and neck with a leaky pen.

But Hallie, watching by Andrew, was conscious of nobody except Jim. How handsome he was! How slighter and finer than these coarse people, whose blood he shared!—Beside him these other men were countrified and inept. Then, instinctively, she drew away from Andrew. A feeling of irritation came over her: People had no right to link her name with Andrew's or to assume that they, in turn, would one day marry! They had no right to think that! . . . Andrew, as if sensing her thought, reached out and fumbled for her hand, but Hallie jerked it away roughly.

Then, before she knew it, the ceremony was over and Suse had become Mrs. Graffenreid. Their friends were crowding about the young couple, congratulating them. Effie talked continuously and waddled about, an excited mother hen, anxious that everything should come off decently.

"Come on," grunted Andrew. "Come on, let's go speak to Suse and Carl." He moved away toward the bride and groom, sure that Hallie would follow him. But Hallie turned, instead, and went through the door. She walked alone down the long walk, lined with cape jasmines and japonica trees, until she came to the grove of live oaks, to the left of the gate. She waited there, discontented with herself and unhappy. Then she heard a footfall, and Jim stood beside her. Her heart began to beat excitedly as Jim came over to her, laughing. It was the first opportunity she had had to speak to him since the night at Mrs. Wrenn's party.

"A pretty girl like you ought not to be out here hiding," he said.

Hallie's eyes moved languorously and, in the moonlight, her reddened lips and cheeks, against the whiteness of her skin, seemed smeared with

tar. "I thought you might see me leave, and be a-followerin' me," she said with heavy coquetry.

Jim laughed, ignoring her meaning. There was an uncomfortable silence for a moment, and then Hallie looked away across the road and said with elaborate carelessness: "I guess you all will miss Suse, after she goes to Oklahoma: I guess you won't have anybody to keep house for you."

"Oh, you and Andrew will be gettin' married before long," said Jim. Then he added, laughingly: "Hope you don't aim to move me out."

A frown came on Hallie's face, and she made a sudden gesture of denial. "I ain't ever said I'd marry Andrew!" She took a step closer to Jim and looked in his face, her lips half opened. A feeling, blended of her passion and a dim recognition of her inability to interest this man, flowed over her. She began to laugh gaily. She put her hand on his sleeve, and moved closer to him. "Why don't you come see me sometime, yourself?" she asked. "Folks might think I had chickenpox, if everybody left me alone, like you do."

Jim started to answer her lightly, but changed his mind. "Andrew thinks a lot of you," he said.

Hallie drew closer to him. "I never said I'd marry Andrew.—I'm not pledged to him in no way."

Jim threw away his cigarette and leaned against a tree, but he did not speak. "If you throw Andrew over now, it's going to hit him right hard," he said gravely.

"I never cared anything about Andrew," continued Hallie. "I never encouraged him none.—Ask him, and he'll tell you the same thing.—Folks haven't got any right to link our names together."

"Let's go inside," said Jim. "They've started dancing again."

Hallie became frightened. "It ain't my fault that I can't stand Andrew, is it?—That ain't my fault!" . . .

"Let's go inside," repeated Jim.

But Hallie shook her head. She walked over and seated herself on a bench beneath the trees.

"I'll tell Andrew where you're at," said Jim. "I'll send him out to see you when I get back indoors."

"All right," said Hallie. "Do whatever you want to."

When Andrew joined her, a few minutes later, she asked that he take her home at once. He protested amiably: The fun was just beginning. There was no use going home this early. She hadn't even spoken to Carl and Suse; he wanted her to meet his sister, Effie, and her family! But Hallie could not be budged and, in the end, Andrew, uncomprehending and devoted, did what she wanted.

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Hallie was more silent than usual that night. She sat quietly in the automobile, thinking about her affairs. Already she had decided upon one thing: She would stop people from thinking of her and Andrew as sweethearts; she would end his courtship immediately!

And so when Andrew came to call the following night, she would not see him. Her mother met him instead. She stood blocking the door, not asking him in, her lips puckered sullenly. "Hallie ain't feelin' so well tonight," she said, her words all set in italics.

Inside Andrew caught sight of Neil Barrows in his stocking feet, his head buried in a paper, as if he were ashamed and wanted it known that he had no part in this matter. While his wife talked, Neil kept turning the pages of his paper nervously, and humming a tune under his breath. Andrew saw, also, the numerous young children, their school books clutched to them, balanced for flight, if he entered.

"Can't I get her something to ease her?" he asked.

"No," said Mrs. Barrows; "no, I don't think so." Then she repeated, as if explaining everything. "Hallie ain't feelin' so well. . . ."

"I'll come over tomorrow night," said Andrew. "Maybe she'll be all right then. . . ."

"No," said Mrs. Barrows, with even more pointed emphasis. "I don't think Hallie'll be feelin' well tomorrow, either."

At last even Andrew understood that he was being dismissed. He stood twisting his hat for a moment, his face and neck turning red slowly. "Yes, ma'am," he said. Then, with dignity, he turned and walked down the steps, and out of the gate. He never returned to the Barrows' house at the end of Calumet Avenue, and he did not see Hallie again for a long time.

At noon, in Hodgetown, the dinner hour was announced by the blowing of whistles. The planing mill, with its shrill, irritated toot, came first, as a rule, and then, a second later, the larger whistles atop the saw-mill began to bellow. Most of the workmen hurried home to their families, but a few, who lived too far away, brought their dinners to the mill in tin pails, and ate it there.

Neil Barrows, a great hand for a hot meal, had his dinner brought to him each day by one of his younger children. He would spread it out before him on his desk, cluttered with tools and soiled waste, and eat rapidly. Occasionally he invited Jim Tallon, or one of the other men who carried cold lunches, to share his meal.

One night, not long after Suse had gone to Oklahoma, Neil mentioned, casually, that Jim had relished a particular dish which his wife

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had prepared. Mrs. Barrows beamed throughout her bulk and said she was glad her cooking was appreciated: there being few enough who did know tasty cooking when they saw it. But Hallie sat thinking: Her father had given her an idea. The next day she announced that she would carry her farther's dinner in the future. She said it wasn't right to send one of the younger children to the mill alone; they might get hurt. Then, too, they often played along the route, and when dinner finally reached their father, it was almost cold, as he often said himself. The more Hallie talked on the subject, the more eloquent she became, but her reasoning fooled nobody, although she was convinced, in her own mind, that she had taken them all in. All that afternoon she planned what she would say to Jim when she met him again: She would be charming, irresistible,—a movie siren: and she worded his own answers to meet the necessities of her steadily mounting love.

But Jim, as if understanding her plan, and determining to frustrate it, would invariably walk away at her approach, and run up the iron ladder that led to his loft. He would sit there listening to her chatter below, cursing her, and finish his lunch alone.

But the more Jim retreated before her, the harder Hallie pressed him. She had never possessed either subtlety or finesse, and now she forgot even caution. She began wearing her hair a new way, with tiny curls plastered against her forehead and cheeks. She bought herself colored stockings from the commissary, and rouged her cheeks and lips more heavily than she had before. But Jim avoided her consistently, no matter what she did, or what she wore to charm him. He never went down to the millwright's office any more. At noon he would sit alone in his loft and eat his lunch.

Then, one day, Hallie abandoned her last reserve. While her father was eating, she walked away from him, and climbed the ladder that led to Jim's loft. She had prepared a special dish for him that morning, and, even now, her lips rehearsed her speech of presentation. Jim saw her head rising up the ladder as she climbed slowly. He got up at once from his bench, too carefully unaware of her presence, and when she entered the loft, he was working on his saws again. The noise of the files made a rasping sound and sparks, like blazing frost crystals, leaped under the whirring emery wheels, and expired at the instant they touched the oil soaked floor.

He knew that she had stopped behind him and was regarding him, but he would not look up, keeping his eyes steadily on his work. He did not even turn when she came closer to him, although he could smell the cheap perfume she wore, and feel her breath on his neck.

"I fixed up a dish of fried chicken for you,—Suse said you liked it with tomato gravy," she began.

Jim gazed at his saws. "Suse was wrong," he said. "I don't want none of it, thank you."

"Oh!" said Hallie. Then she added gaily: "Tell me what dishes you do like, and I'll fix 'em for you sometime."

Jim did not answer for a moment, then he said: "Why don't you scour that stuff offen your face?—You look like a nigger wench on pay-night!"

"All right, Jim," she said. "I will if you want me to."

"I don't care what you do!" said Jim; "it don't make no difference to me one way or the other." Then he looked her up and down with unconcealed contempt.

Suddenly Hallie became ashamed. She turned and ran down the ladder, the dish still in her hands. . . . "He's got no right to look at me that way!" she thought. . . . "I never done nothin' to him! . . . Who does he think he is, anyway?"

When she arrived home that afternoon, she went to her room, and began to cry. After awhile her mother came in, but Hallie would not talk to her. Mrs. Barrows sat on the bed, fanning her daughter and stroking her hair. "I wouldn't be a-botherin' about him, iffen I was you, baby!—There's plenty more men in the world!" . . .

But Hallie would not be comforted. She continued to bury her face in her pillow, and to kick the side of the bed. "I declare," said Mrs. Barrows; "I don't know what's coming over people nowadays: the way they act!—I wish your pappa had never moved from Georgia! . . . People in Georgia didn't act this way!"

"Who is Jim Tallon, to think he's so fine?" demanded Hallie in a choked voice. "Who is he to treat me like I was dirt?" . . .

"Now, baby!—Now, baby!" said Mrs. Barrows over and over.

That next noon one of the younger Barrows children took their father's dinner, as of old. Hallie never went near the mill again. As a matter of fact, she rarely went anywhere. She became moody and sullen, and she cried a great deal that summer. Occasionally she saw Andrew at church, or at prayer-meeting, but she did not speak to him any more. She blamed him, vaguely, without thinking the matter clearly to its conclusion, for Jim's attitude toward her.

Then, about that time, she began to rehearse in her mind long scenes in which she met Jim in a wood, or on a lonely road, away from other people. In such phantasies, Jim would stop, breathless, amazed at her beauty and her power. The contemptuous look on his face had changed to one of adoration. He would stand helpless before her for a time, then

he would begin to plead for her favors, trying to take her in his arms, but, sure of her power, she moved away. Then Jim dropped to his knees, his eyes burning with love, his pale face transfigured with his passion, and crawled to her slowly, his face lifted to hers like a dog pleading with its master. . . . And Hallie, in these day-dreams, saw herself repulsing the groveling figure with her foot; but he would come back insistently. Finally, after she had made him suffer enough, she would lift him up from the road, and press him to her bosom, and their lips would meet with passion.

This dream recurred so often that Hallie could not free herself of it, and gradually she confused it with reality. It became so actual, so powerful to her, that one afternoon, late, she walked across fields in the direction of the Tallon home until she reached the spot where the Moganville road ran into the State highway. She stood behind a tree for a long time, and waited. It was almost dark, when, at last, she saw Jim approaching, tired from his days work at the mill. At sight of him, all her plans vanished. She was helpless again, and she let him pass unnoticed, unable to move or make a sound. Then, when his figure was almost lost in the soft dusk, she found herself running after him, calling his name. Jim stopped, and looked at her, as she came up to him quickly, panting from her exertion.

"Ifen it gives you satisfaction to hear it," said Jim, "Andrew hasn't been the same since you threw him over."

"That's not my fault, Jim," she said humbly. Then she added quickly: "There's no sense in your acting this way.—Why can't you and me be good friends?—I don't bear you no hard feelings!"

"No?" said Jim; "Well, I'm awful glad to hear that!"

"There's no use in your treating me like you do. We can have a good time together, if you'd just act right!" Then she lowered her head, to hide her shamed face: "I'm not askin' you to marry me, if you don't want to." . . .

Jim looked at her with his eyes half veiled. "So you're the bitch my brother's been pinin' for!" Then he laughed. "He's lucky you wouldn't have him, I say!"

"I never cared anything about Andrew," she said, as if explaining patiently to a child. "I never said I'd marry him: I never led him on any.—Honest to God, I didn't!"

She came closer to him, and took his hand: "That's all past and gone, Jim. . . . What do you care what Andrew thinks? What you and me do ain't ere a bit of his business!"

Jim shoved her aside. "You bitch!" he said. "You dog bitch!" Then he walked away. Hallie ran after him down the road, trying to hold him,

but he would not stop. Finally she sat down by the road and began to cry.

She walked back home through the Cornells' fields, past Wentworth Lane and over the footbridge that spanned Black Creek. Then, finally, the sound of water pouring over the mill dam came to her ears, and lights in the Hodgetown houses twinkled out. There was, in her, a deep sense of disgust with herself and anger at the Tallons. Who were they to act so high and mighty? What right did Jim have to treat her the way he did? . . . A lot of nerve the Tallons had, holding themselves up as better than other people! . . . As Hallie turned into Calumet Avenue, and approached her home, she saw Will Calkins, who clerked in the commissary, sitting on his porch with his wife, Bessie. The Calkins spoke to her, being neighbors, and Hallie stopped for a moment, to talk, in the manner of country people.

"How come I haven't seen Andrew Tallon's Ford parked in front of your house lately?" asked Will. "You and him haven't quit sweetheartin', have you?"

An unexpected feeling of animation came over Hallie. "Him!" she said. . . . "Me a-sweetheartin' with that harelip? . . . Why, I only let him come to see me a time or two because I felt sorry for him. I knew no other girl would have him settin' around!" She laughed derisively. "Me sweetheartin' with that—that—"

"Don't pay any attention to Will," said Bessie Calkins. "Will's just trying to tease you."

"Oh, sure," said Hallie. "I knowed that, all right— a girl would have to be deaf *and* blind to stand him around, I guess." Then Hallie placed her hands on her cushioned hips and swayed them insolently. "I never could understand more than half he said, he talks so funny." Then, to illustrate her point, she drew down her upper lip and began to imitate his grunting speech. She did it with remarkable fidelity. Her success as an actress was instantaneous.

Old Mrs. Westerlund, Will Calkins' mother-in-law, came out of the house and sat on the porch, listening with delight. "Law!—Law!" she gasped, throwing her apron over her head in an excess of mirth. "You ought to be in the moving pictures, Hallie!—You're funnier than Marie Dressler!"

Finally Will Calkins was able to control his merriment. "Do that part about how he used to fish in Harry's Lake again," he pleaded.

"Sure!" said Hallie. She threw back her head and laughed also.

The sense of elation that had come over her grew as she continued to entertain her audience, which was steadily increasing and steadily urging

her to go on. Old Mrs. Westerlund took out her teeth and held them in her lap. She was afraid that they would spring out of her mouth, and on to the ground, she was laughing so. . . . "You better not let Jim Tallon hear you mocking his brother, though," she cackled in delight. "He cut a trimmerman at the mill one day for mocking his brother." . . .

Hallie's eyes flamed angrily. "I hope he does hear it," she said. "I think Jim's even lower down than Andrew, and I'll tell him so to his face, if he wants to hear it."

"He! he! he!" cackled old Mrs. Westerlund.

Then Hallie walked away from her audience, a sense of wellbeing flowing through her body. She had found a way to revenge herself on Jim for his insults! She knew that her words would be repeated over and over and that Jim would hear them from a dozen sources. As she entered the gate to her home, and banged it angrily behind her, she snapped her fingers at nothing at all. "I don't care *that* for all the Tallons who ever lived!" she said. Then she ran up the steps excitedly.

Her period of tears and of vague, impossible dreams had passed. The next day she went to the barber shop and had her hair cut. She put it up in curl papers, at night, and brushed it so that it stood out on her head like black, tangled wire. She bought a pair of long earrings in Reedyville one day and commenced wearing them.

She was much sought after now both by the boys of the county, and the men at the mill. She went everywhere: To dances, picnics and singings. At night there were half a dozen men sitting on the Barrow's porch listening to her cheap, second hand witticisms. But men were not the only people who were attracted to her: A group of young Hodgetown girls followed her about and giggled at everything she said, aping her affectations and her insolence. This group would meet in the company commissary, particularly on a Saturday night, and before very long a group of men would surround them. Hallie pretended to ignore the men, to hold them all in contempt, and as she stood in the center of the group, a cheap, heavily rouged village belle, she kept glancing about her, over people's shoulders, or shifting her position in order that she might see the exact instant Jim Tallon came into the store, if he came at all. Once she had seen him, and knew he was within earshot, she would ignore his presence with elaborate care, but invariably she would begin to make fun of his family, sure that her voice carried to his ears.

"I heerd you come pretty near marrying a Tallon, though," said Paul Singer. "I heerd you and Andrew was stuck on each other."

"Him!" said Hallie in simulated amazement.—"That harelip? Why the sight of him makes me want to puke!" . . .

The group of girls caught their breaths in admiration. Then they glanced up and looked at Jim standing by the soft drink counter, talking to one of the clerks.

"Tell about the time he took you home from Wrenn's party," demanded Ellie Lou Williams. . . . "Tell about that time, Hallie!" Then she began to laugh, in anticipation.

Hallie, too, began to laugh. "The poor sap opened the door of his car, that night," she said, "and got out. Then he tried to hug me, but I told him there wasn't no 'taters and that the vines was all dead!" she she lifted one corner of her slack, voluptuous mouth and giggled: " 'I want you to be happy, honey', he said. 'I want to take keer of you and love you as long as I live.' " Hallie spoke with her head lowered and her hands stretched before her, palms outward, reproducing his gestures and his cloudy speech with a cruel precision. . . . " 'I think you're the prettiest girl I ever seen: You're like a magnolia flower in full bloom'!"

Everybody roared at that. "Maybe so," said Rafe Hall, "only I never seen a magnolia flower that weighed 165 pounds."

"Then he tried to kiss me," continued Hallie. "I almost jumped out of my skin: it made me sick at my stomach. When I got home, I scrubbed the place with scouring soap."

Jim walked away with elaborate carelessness into the dark, where no one could see him, and stood behind the drug store, watching. A long time later he saw Hallie and Paul Singer come out of the commissary. He saw them turn into Calumet Avenue and approach the Barrow's dwelling. They stood at the gate for a moment, kissing under the trees, and then Paul went away reluctantly. But Hallie remained by the gate, her arms resting on the fence, as if awaiting some one.

She looked up calmly, her eyes cold and hard, when Jim approached, and spoke to her. "How's your loony brother you think so much of?" she asked.

"You dirty slut!" said Jim.

Hallie laughed and twisted her fingers through the huge imitation pearl necklace she wore. "You Tallons think you're better than other folks, don't you?" She snapped her fingers under his nose, like a fish-wife. . . . "Well, I don't care that for the whole passel of you!"

"You're lying," said Jim. "If I said the word, you'd crawl to me on your hands and knees."

"I wouldn't spit on such dirt," she said. Then she made a gesture of disgust with her lips. "The sight of you turns my stomach, nearabouts!"

Jim came over to her, leaning across the intervening space. He caught

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her by the forearms and jerked her forward so savagely that her head snapped backwards.

"I'm not afraid of you none," she said. "You may scare some folks, but can't scare me none!" She twisted her arms free, opened the gate and came out on the sidewalk where he stood. "Let's go down the road a piece, if you want to talk to me," she said.

The Barrow's house was the last on the street. A hundred yards away was an untouched grove of pines which divided the houses of the white people from the negro quarters. Hallie walked toward this grove, hearing Jim's step behind her. When she reached it, she turned and faced him. It was September and there was a faint chill in the air. They stood looking at each other for a few moments, without sound.

"Iffen I hear you mock Andrew again, I'll kill you, woman or no woman," he said quietly.

"That harelip!" she said; "that—!"

Then Jim slapped her in the mouth sharply with his open palm. Hallie drew back, her body rigid with hatred, but Jim stood there looking at her. His face was very pale, and his nostrils were opening and closing. She could feel the warmth from his body, and hear his quick breathing. Then, suddenly, her hatred melted away, and she was helpless again. She thought of him naked, standing there, and of herself, also naked, in his arms. She began to make a peculiar noise, and without plan, and without thought, she pressed her body against his and began grinding with her hips. Suddenly Jim pulled her closer to him and kissed her, their mouths open, their teeth clicking together. . . . "Wipe that kiss off!" he said. "Scour that one off with soap!" . . .

A strange feeling came over her. She pulled his head down and pressed it against her breasts. "You bitch!" said Jim, as if he were about to cry. . . . "You dog bitch!"

Hallie remained silent. She could not have spoken if she had wanted to. Far away she heard Will Calkin's automobile stop, and the sound of the garage door being slammed. To the west the slag pit lighted the sky with a faint glare.

"If I said ere a word, I could have you any way I want," said Jim, his voice trembling.

"Yes," she said.

As if awaiting this admission, Jim shoved her away and hit her squarely with his fist. Hallie fell against a pine tree and slid heavily to the ground. She lay silently on the carpet of pine needles, not moving. Instantly Jim was beside her, his arms about her, his body pressed against

her. "Honey!—Honey, baby!—I wouldn't hurt you for the world!" he pleaded. "Speak to me sweetheart. . . ."

Hallie opened her eyes and pulled him to her. "I've got him now," she thought triumphantly. "He hit me: Nobody can ever take him away from me now!" Then she threw her leg over his thigh and pulled him closer.

Later that night, to the surprise of the county, they rode over to Reedyville and were married by a sleepy justice of the peace, whom they had routed from his bed.

But this had all occurred during the previous fall, nine months ago. Many things had happened since that time, and Andrew, sitting by the road, the reins hanging loosely in his hands, thought of those things. After a long time he became aware that somebody was sounding a horn and that somebody else was calling his name over and over in a frail, acid-like voice. He shook himself, and, with an effort, came back to the present to realize that Ed Wrenn and his wife, Addie, had driven up in the road and had stopped.

Addie Wrenn laughed her remote, dead laugh. "I declare, Andrew!" she said, "your mind must have been a thousand miles away."

"Yes, ma'am," he said in confusion, still struggling to remember where he was. He noticed, then, that old Babe, during his preoccupation, had pulled across the road, blocking it. He straightened her out, pulling gently on the reins. "Must a-been dreaming," he said apologetically. "I wasn't thinking where I was at." . . .

"Well, I can't say as how I blame you for being absent minded, or worried," said Addie pointedly.

Ed Wrenn spoke in his slow drawl. "Now Addie, what Jim done ain't ere a bit of our business."

"It is, too," said Addie Wrenn, her mouth setting firmly, the fine, threadlike lines coming out. "It's the business of every decent man and woman in Pearl County when a man abuses his wife, like Jim done, and then leaves her when she's fixing to have a baby."

"It ain't Jim's fault altogether," said Andrew slowly.

"Not his fault?" repeated Mrs. Wrenn incredulously. "Pray tell whose fault it is, then?"

Andrew sat thinking a moment, looking at his hands. "I don't know," he said.

Ed Wrenn started his car again, but Addie called out above the sound of the engine. "I wouldn't worry so much, Andrew. Everything'll come out all right."

"Yes, ma'am," said Andrew.

The Wrenns drove off with a jerk, clouds of smoke-like dust rising from the roadbed and drifting through the tops of the trees. Andrew watched them until they were out of sight and then slapped old Babe on her haunches, with the slack reins, and continued toward the store.

Gramlings General Store stood where the State Road crossed the old Reedyville Highway. It had stood there for many years—long before the Hodge brothers had built their sawmill, three miles to the south. The people of the county, bound by habit, preferred to trade at Gramlings, rather than at the commissary in Hodgetown, or at the modern stores in Reedyville. The proprietor was old Rip Snowdown, a widower, who had, in his youth, married Nellie Gramling, thus inheriting the store and the Gramling land.

Beside his activities as a merchant, Rip farmed on a small scale, cabbages and early vegetables for the city markets. He was childless, and he lived in a frame house, painted yellow. With him lived his sister, Hildy Snowdown, an amazing woman, who was said to be a witch.

During the week, when the farmers were busy working their land, trade at the store, except for an occasional stranger who stopped to buy gasoline, was nonexistent. But on Saturdays the place was alive with people: They would commence arriving as early as ten o'clock in the morning, sometimes bringing their dinners with them, which they would spread, picnic fashion, on tables built in the gum thicket to the left of the store. The Singers, the Tarleton girls and the Barascales always came early, anxious to miss none of the gossip, and acted as a reception committee to greet the late comers. By one o'clock the place was crowded.

As Andrew Tallon came around the bend in the road, he saw before him the familiar scene. Men sat lazily on the steps, chewing tobacco and swapping stories, while their women folks huddled in groups, exchanging recipes or gossiping. Pigs grunted contentedly in the hot dust; horses neighed and shook their manes, and a flock of penned guinea-fowl stuck out their red and white, clownlike heads, and made a sound which resembled, equally, the creaking of a strap and the croaking of a frog.

At the front of the store, there was a hitching post made by nailing a slender pine sapling to posts driven in the ground. Andrew saw that it was now almost filled with horses and mules who reared their heads in the air, and switched their tails at green flies. To the rear of the store, and behind the barn of the yellow frame house, was another post, used rarely. Andrew remembered this second post, and decided to tie old Babe there: He was disturbed this afternoon with his thoughts of the past, and he dreaded meeting people, or having them ask him questions. He wanted

only to make his purchases and get away as soon as possible. Slowly he turned old Babe's head, and guided her down the lane that led back of the house. He was glad, somehow, that he had remained unobserved by the people standing about.

When he had tied Babe, he came through the Snowdown yard, and approached the store from the rear. Before he could distinguish individual words, he heard a confused babble of talk from within the store, talk so hollow, and so sourceless, that it sounded as if it came from people living in the center of the earth. Finally the tinkling, insistent voice of Addie Wrenn detached itself from the blur of the other voices, and he stopped, close to the rear window of the store, listening . . . "There he was with old Babe blocking the road bumpsidewhack—sitting in his buggy like a man asleep. Ed tooted his horn, and we both called him about a dozen times before he even knowed we was there." . . .

Then Hildy Snowdown's nasal twang came out strongly: "There's something funny about the way Andrew's acting. Can't figure out what it is, though.—Hallie's as close mouthed as a mouse trap, and sometimes I think Andrew ain't got sense enough to know what it's about one way or the other."

"You're wrong, Miss Hildy, iffen you take Andrew for a fool," said Rafe Hall. "Him and me went to school together. He was the brightest pupil Professor Drewery had in his class, or so he said.—The trouble with Andrew is, he can't express himself well, on account of his lip."

"Why I always thought Andrew had plenty of *common* sense, Hildy," said Addie Wrenn in a diplomatic voice.

"Maybe so, maybe so," said Hildy, "but there's something funny about this whole thing, just the same!" she continued stubbornly.

Rip Snowdown spoke up: "Hildy's done taken to dreaming again. She's dreaming about Jim Tallon this time."

Addie Wrenn began to tinkle her icy laugh. "Well, you know how the Tallons have always acted: They never did do anything like other people."

"I can't understand why Hallie is a-grieving over Jim's leaving her," said Mrs. Holm Barrascale. "Looks like she'd be glad to get shed of him. He treated her shameful enough, God knows! . . . I went by their place one day, right after they was married, to get some azalea cuts for my daughter in Reedyville, and when Hallie answered my knock, her eye was black and swollen up. Then I seen her lip was cut. 'Did you hit your face against a door jamb?' I asked. But she didn't have manners enough to answer a civil question. She looked at me like I was dirt

under her feet. She didn't say anything back, she just went and got the cuttings."

"That wasn't nothing at all," said Ellen Waters, "Lord, you all should have passed their place most any night when Jim was steamed up. You could hear him cursing and hollering at her all the way to the road. What surprised me was that Hallie's folks didn't come over and take her back to Hodgetown."

"The men in this county should a-called on Jim and give him a taste of a buggy whip, for abusing his women folks," said old John Singer indignantly.

"I'd like to see the man big enough to hit me!" said Alice Barrascale; "I'd like to see the man big enough to black ere an eye of mine!"

Alice Barrascale was a woman so crippled with rheumatism and old age that she could no longer straighten her back. She went about bent at a perpetual angle, like some obscure problem in mathematics, and she had to be lifted in and out of her son's wagon. At her words, Ham Carter and Rafe Hall began to laugh genially. "What would you do iffen Holm Barrascale started to beat you up, Aunt Alice?"

"I'd heat me a pot of water, and pour it onto him, that's what!" she said ferociously. "No living man can hit me!"

"How about that, Holm?" asked Hildy Snowdown. "You heerd what your wife said she'd dō to you."

"I wouldn't put it past her neither," said Holm. "I wouldn't put nothin' past her when she's riled."

Alice Barrascale waved her arms and worked her toothless jaws, proud of the attention she had attracted. . . . "Can't understand how a big strong woman like Hallie would take such treatment offen ere a man!"

"Well, Aunt Alice, I guess Hallie really loved her husband," said Addie Wrenn primly. "I guess she was always hopin' that the better side of his nature would come out one of these days." . . .

As Andrew stood by the window listening, his face was drawn, as if in pain, and his small blue eyes closed suddenly. For a moment the conversation became general, as Lafe Cornells and his family entered the store, and then the Tallons and their eccentricities emerged again.

"I used to think old man Lem Tallon could do the strangest things, and Bradford wasn't no slouch either, once he got started, but I believe Andrew beats them all for foolishment." Theron Cornells stopped and cleared his throat. "Guess what he done with the Delta Patch this year?" . . .

Then, without waiting for an answer, he continued: "My brother, George, was over by the Tallon's place last week, and he told me about it,

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but I wouldn't believe it. So we went back, and I seen for myself: Andrew had ploughed the Delta Patch around the edges, but right in the middle of the field he left a square of last year's stalks . . . 'bout a hundred feet by a hundred feet, I'd say. But don't ask me why he done it, because I don't know!"

Everybody shook their heads and made a noise with their lips.

Hildy Snowdown, serving her customers, but listening with sharp ears to every word of the talk, spoke suddenly: "I had a dream about that field. Dreamed somebody had buried a pot of gold money there, and lost track of it. . . . It had something to do with the Civil War." Then her face became set in a baffled frown, and her eyes were drawn inward.

Andrew, eavesdropping, hearing these things, had a sudden wish to run away through the pine woods; not to enter the store at all. His clothes seemed oppressive, binding him and his breathing, and he kept flexing his muscles to relieve some inward pressure. His back itched as if somebody were tickling him with a feather. Then he closed his eyes and leaned against the side of the store, making his grunting, pig-like sound.

"When I seen Andrew by the road," continued Addie Wrenn, "I asked him if anybody had heerd from Jim, but he said no."

"Here's a funny thing," said Ed Wrenn. "Jim had a week's pay coming to him from the mill, but he didn't take it before he run away. That seems cu'rus to me," he added, "going off withouten his pay!"

"I happen to know all about that money," said Rafe Hall. "Mr. Johnny Everett offered it to Andrew, but Andrew wouldn't take it. He said he and Hallie didn't want it and that Mr. Johnny could give it to the missionaries, or keep it until Jim come back, for all of him."

"I dreamed about Jim Tallon three nights running," insisted Hildy in her strong, nasal voice. "You can't tell me: there's something strange about this thing."

There came a complete silence for a moment. "Jim didn't have no particular enemies, did he?" asked Holm Barrascale. "If he did, I never heerd of them."

"None I can think of right now," said John Singer. "Jim was right well liked at the mill. Mr. Russell Hodge thought the world and all of him, I know, even after he got married and taken to drinking so heavy."

"What puzzles me," said Rip Snowdown, "is nobody saw him after he left the mill that Saturday night. I was down in Reedyville on business about a week ago, and I seen Ellis Noble, who's conductor on the Pigeon River Special. Ellis was asking about some of the old boys, amongst them Jim. I told him Jim had run off just before Christmas and left his wife. 'Where did he go to?' asked Ellis. I don't know, I said, but he told

several of the boys at the mill, beforehand, that he was going to Birmingham and get work in the steel mills."

"How did he get to Birmingham without riding my train to the junction?" asked Ellis.

"I never thought of that," I said. "Didn't Jim ride with you that night?"

"No," said Ellis. "I haven't seen Jim Tallon since he married."

"There's something strange going on, as sure as you're born!" said Hildy Snowdown. She sat down on a stool behind the counter, her arms relaxed before her, thinking. Then her eyes almost closed and a dreaming look came into her face.

"Be quiet everybody!" whispered Addie Wrenn. "Hildy's going to see something!" The crowd before her became hushed, their mouths opened expectantly. Hildy was the seventh daughter of a seventh daughter. It was said that she could see the wind, and that she could hear the voice of the unsettled dead.

At that point Andrew came into the store. He strode over to Hildy, his head lowered, and touched her with his hands, giving her the list which Hallie had prepared. She looked up, her body relaxed, and slowly her eyes came back to this world. Andrew turned and glanced at the people surrounding him, feeling alien and apart from them. Outside the June sun beat without mercy, but in the store it was dim and cool. There was a smell of calico, axelgrease and apples in the store.

"Why, what a shame!" said Addie Wrenn. "Hildy was fixin' to see something when you stopped her." . . .

"I seen the Delta Patch again, with gold buried in it," said Hildy. "I seen the pot rusted away, and the coins spilling out. I seen a man and a woman each claiming the gold without ere a way to divide it."

Andrew gave his pig-like grunting laugh. "There ain't no gold buried in my field, Hildy, if that's what you're a-dreamin' of.—Wish there was gold buried there!"

Then Hildy straightened up and began checking the list that Andrew had laid before her, putting each item on the counter. "Hallie must be expecting the baby pretty soon, now," said Addie.

"I guess she is," said Andrew. "She hasn't said nothin' to me about it, though." He stood silent, resting his weight on one foot and then the other. When he entered the store, the stream of conversation had stopped. At last the order was filled, and Andrew picked up the supplies before him. "Got to be gettin' back," he said. He turned, then, and walked to the door. When he reached it, he faced his audience and tried to smile, but a sudden fear had come over him, and he began to shiver. Then

he walked back into the crowded store, as if he had lost all sense of direction, and retreated again. When he found the door he lunged out into the bright sunlight, as if struggling through water. But he stopped, again, when he came to the rear window, and stood by it, listening. The people in the store had begun talking about him already.

"Andrew is going to be the craziest of the Tallons, yet," said Alice Barrascale. "You just mark my words."

"Andrew's been actin' strange lately," said Addie Wrenn. "I've knowed Andrew since he was a baby; I can't understand him actin' that a-away!"

"Do you reckon Andrew really knows where Jim is, like some folks are saying?" asked Alice Barrascale.

There was a sharp sound of breath, and then silence, as Mrs. Barrascale put into words the half-formed thought in the minds of them all.

"People who say such things ought to be ashamed of themselves!" said Addie Wrenn. "Andrew and Jim were always devoted to each other."

"Well," said Theron Cornells, "remember Andrew was sparking Hal-lie first, and Jim beat his time."

"Why, Theron!" said Addie Wrenn. . . . "Why, Theron, to even think such a thing!" . . .

Andrew, listening by the window, turned quickly, the roof of his mouth dry, his tongue feeling thick and swollen. He half ran, half loped to the post where he had tied old Babe. . . . "Why can't people let me alone?" he thought. . . . "Why can't they mind their own business?" . . .

At four o'clock the force of the heat had somewhat abated, but the sun was still high in the sky. Andrew reached the grove of oaks, to the left of his home, and turned in from the road. Asa Cleaver saw him from the porch, and hurried down to let him in. He stood there wiping his neck with a handkerchief.

"You got back early," he said.

Andrew nodded his head. "Wasn't no use in hanging around Gram-lings."

He drove into the yard and turned toward the barn. He unhitched old Babe and gave her a slap on the rump. Then, quickly, he put his arms around her neck, clinging to her, and Babe nuzzled his shoulder, as if understanding his emotion. He stood there a long time, but finally he came out and closed the door, and looked at the house.

The Cleaver children were running through the grove of trees and down the slope that led to the creek, shouting in their sharp voices. Be-side them raced Tobey, the shepherd, whose bark was barytone and dig-

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nified, and Toxey, a fox terrier, who yipped shrilly, and tugged at their flying legs. Some distance behind the children walked Effie and Hallie, with their arms full of the flowers they had gathered. Effie was holding the flowers away from her and shaking her shoulders quickly, endeavoring to separate the sodden cloth from her perspiring back. They were walking toward the Tallon burying ground, a fenced plot shaded by willows, that lay on the knoll overlooking the creek. Andrew, from his post by the barn, stood watching them until they reached the burying ground, and opened the whitewashed gate. Then the racing children stopped, the barking dogs became silent of a sudden, and there was no sound in the hot June air except the sound of Old Babe crunching corn with her worn teeth, and the contented, minor cluck of the hens, still immersed in their baths of hot dust. All about him, in the fields, the young cotton was grayish-green, one precise, unshaded color. It rippled occasionally under the hot breeze that came intermittently from the direction of the creek.

Effie Cleaver's surprise was genuine when she reached the burying ground and saw that not one weed obtruded on the graves of her kin. The aisles between the mounds had been swept recently with a brushbroom and white sand from the creek had been scattered on the walk. Against the fence, pink and blue larkspur was blooming in a bed.

Effie entered the burying ground solemnly, and seated herself on the bench that Andrew had made for his mother, after his father's death. The graves stretched out before Effie, more than a dozen of them, calm and untroubled. The children, sitting with her on the bench, squirmed uncomfortably, and Gloria Swanson began shaking a slender crepe-myrtle tree, now in full bloom. A shower of petals, pinker than sea coral, fell continuously from the trees and on to the bench where Effie sat.

Hallie had not entered the graveyard. She stood at the gate, her back turned away, as if some inborn delicacy forbade her looking at grief which she could not share. Presently Effie spoke to her. "You're a real sweet woman, Hallie."

"It's nothing more than right for me to take care of the graves of Jim's folks," she answered. Effie sighed profoundly. "I wouldn't say that you owe us Tallons much love," she said. Then, more indignantly: "I don't know what come over Jim to make him treat you the way he did: He ought to be ashamed of himself for the way he acted!" Turning to her gaping children, she added: "Bud!—Gloria Swanson! . . . You all go down to the creek and play in the white sand, where Mamma used to play when she was a little girl, but don't get wet. Your Aunt Hallie and I want to talk.—Take Lessie May along, too, if she wants to go, but don't leave her go in wading." The children, who had been sitting silent

and depressed, scurried to the gate, and presently they ran down the slope of the hill that led to the creek.

After they had gone, there was silence between the women until Hallie spoke, weighing her words carefully, as if she were voicing something important for all people: "I want Jim back.—It don't make no difference how mean he treated me!" She opened the gate and walked toward Effie, and Effie got up and took her in her arms. "Why, honey, don't cry that way. Everything is going to be all right. . . ."

"I want Jim back!" said Hallie. She lay with her face pressed against Effie Cleaver's hot breast. . . . "I want him back so bad, Effie!"

"Yes, baby, and he's a-comin' back to you, someday; don't you worry. He ain't been gone long—six months ain't such a long time; and I'll bet before the year's out, he'll be right back here asking you to forgive him for what he done. No man can stay away long when he knows he's got a baby.—Jim'll be back, too, and then you'll both be so happy again." Effie raised Hallie's head and kissed her gently. Then she sat down on the bench again, and pulled Hallie down beside her.

Hallie stretched out on the bench and rested her face in Effie's lap, and Effie patiently stroked her hair. "I won't ever see Jim again," she said over and over. "I won't ever see him again, Effie. . . ."

"Now, honey, that's right foolish, and you know it.—You're unstrung, like any woman in your condition would be."

Suddenly Hallie sat upright. Her eyes were red with her grief. "Nobody knows what I went through. I never told ere a soul, Effie. I said I wouldn't tell nobody, and I haven't, neither."

Effie kissed her again on her hot forehead. "You can tell me anything you want to, honey, and I'll understand it: Jim's my own brother, and I love him, but I know what you had to put up with: Everybody in the county knows, and I've never heerd one word said against you. Everybody says you made Jim a good wife!" . . .

At that moment the women heard Asa Cleaver's voice approaching, and the grunting, pig-like voice of Andrew. Hallie wiped her eyes and sat upright quickly. Her mood of self-abasement had passed. Her eyes became hard again, like the lidless, undecided eyes of a water snake. Effie spoke to Andrew: "It's a shame you haven't told Hallie more about your own kin folks."

Andrew scuffed his feet against the gravel walk and pressed his hairy hands together. "I'd a told her, iffen I knowed she wanted me to," he said. Then he lowered his eyes, in confusion, and kicked at a stone.

The graves of the Tallons, mathematically precise, were lying before them. Grass grew thick and green over each of them, unhindered by

marble, as grass should grow over every grave. At the head of each mound, a wooden slab recited briefly the biography of its particular bones, and around the margin of each plot, someone had placed pink and lavender shells from the Gulf.

Effie decorated the first grave, tinier than the others, at which no marking stone stood. "This is Breck, lying here," she explained. "He was named after Mamma's brother, who went to Alaska.—I'm the only person in the world who remembers Breck now and I can't recollect his face very good. He come in between Brad and Andrew: I was just a little girl when he was taken sick and died."

Asa began to yawn and stretch himself, bored with these family matters which he had heard before.

" . . . And this is Bradford's grave," said Effie. "When they brought him home from France, Mamma wanted to have a simple funeral, a short sermon and a prayer, but Papa wanted a band, and guns fired. Papa almost died himself when he seen Bradford's casket. He cried for a day and a night and then told Mamma to do whatever she wanted to. So Mamma had a few people, who had knowed Bradford, come over, and Preacher Boutwell spoke and said a prayer. . . . But Papa wouldn't come to the service, after all.—Papa was a happy-natured man who liked to joke and laugh: He couldn't stand sadness of any sort; it tore him all to pieces. . . . That morning when people started to come, he got drunk, and while Preacher Boutwell was speaking, we could hear Papa in the house crying and breaking dishes." . . .

Asa stretched himself again, and moved away from the fence. "Come on, Andrew," he said. "Let's go down to the branch, and see if the kids have got into any mischief."

But Andrew shook his head. "I'm going up to the house and chop stove-wood," he said.

Effie did not pause in her talk. . . . "Brad and Bessie Tarleton were engaged to be married, when he went away to war. That was back in 1917, but Bessie never married anybody else. She had her chances, after Brad was killed, and good ones, too.— Poor Bessie! She put on mourning for Brad, and she's never taken it off, since. She's getting old and queer actin', it seems to me. She never goes anywhere, and all she's got left is her singing, and her Missionary society." Effie stopped her work and sat staring at Brad's grave. Then she shook her head, as if puzzled. . . . "Death is such a cruel, strange thing!" she said.

Hallie sat down on the bench and rested her face in her palms. A hot wind had risen from the creek and the blooming cotton, quick and precise, bent all in one direction. Across the creek, in the direction of the

Cornells farm, cows, with tinkling bells, were crossing Gentry's ford. Then a negro woman, passing down the lane, laughed in a voice as deep and as rich as the earth; and in the swamp, a long way off, two hounds bayed in different keys. . . . These sounds, blended and yet separate, came through the still afternoon and reached Hallie's ears across the drone of Effie's endless recollections. They came blurred and sweetened by their remoteness, as if they had been filtered through gauze. But Hallie was hardly aware of the sounds about her: She rested her head against the crepe-myrtle tree and looked at the bland, unvexed sky, thinking of nothing except her own unending sorrow. . . . "Jim!—Jim!" she kept whispering to herself. "I tried my best, honey!—I done what I could.—Why couldn't we a-been happy together?" . . .

At last Effie rose stiffly from her haunches. She raised her eyes and squinted at the sun. "Laws sake!" she exclaimed. "It must be nigh on to five thirty!—I'd better be gettin' home now, and fix supper." Then she turned toward the creek and called shrilly to her husband, and her children. The exertion flushed her cheeks more than ordinarily. Veins in her neck stood out, and the bird shot moles emerged with gradual distinctness.

"Effie, what made Jim care so much about Andrew?" asked Hallie with unconcealed bitterness.

"Why, Hallie—to ask such a question!" said Effie laughing: "they're *brothers!*—It's nothing but right that they should think a lot of each other."

When the Cleavers had gone, Andrew went into his room and changed again to his working clothes. On the wall of his room was the picture which the French government had sent the Tallons after Bradford's death. Above a background of marching poilus and a burning town, an angel of war, her face angry and distorted, beckoned with a broken sword. Below the print were the words which recited Bradford's bravery. These words, written in a beautiful, microscopic hand, had never been read. Andrew would often puzzle before them, trying by sheer earnestness to guess their meaning. Wondering what fine thing it was Bradford had done; then he would twist his head sideways, in an effort to decipher the name of the general who had signed the citation, but his eyes would become puzzled in a maze of scrolls, dots and wavering lines. . . .

Outside, in the kitchen, Hallie was building a fire in the stove. She, too, had changed her clothes, her finery put away. When Andrew came

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out of his room and stood behind her, she was wearing her shapeless, cotton house frock.

"Folks at Gramlings were all talking about Jim," he said. But Hallie did not answer. She stood rigidly by the stove, a stick of wood in her hand, and Andrew became confused before her even gaze.

"They're talking about the Delta Patch, too: They're wondering why I didn't plough all of it!" . . .

Hallie turned and opened the lid of the stove, throwing in the piece of wood. Then she set a kettle on to boil. "I told you not to leave that unploughed patch," she said.

"I stood back of Gramlings, by the window, and listened to folks a-talkin', said Andrew. Then his voice became choked and agonizing. "They're all askin' why Jim never went back for his money: Their wondering about that again! . . . And they're saying it's funny nobody seen Jim after that Saturday night when he left the mill." . . .

"Let 'em talk," said Hallie contemptuously. "Let 'em talk themselves out."

Then Andrew's body began to tremble, in spite of all he could do. "I got scared listenin' to them.—Folks are all hintin' that I know more about Jim than I let on. . . . What they're hintin' today, they'll be sayin' for a fact tomorrow."

Hallie turned her back away, and went on with her cooking.

" . . . Hildy Snowdown's taken to dreamin' about the Delta Patch: Been dreamin' gold money was buried there." . . .

"I told you to plough that patch," said Hallie.

Andrew sat down on a chair and looked at the uneven floor which Hallie had recently scrubbed white. "I tried to plough it, Hallie!" he said humbly; "but I couldn't do it.—I couldn't plough over Jim!—I should a-knowed not to bury him face upward!" He got up and walked to the door, leaning against it. . . . "I see Jim's face every minute of the day and night. I can't get shed of his face."

Hallie looked at him a moment and then faced her stove again, her big belly almost touching it. "You better dig Jim up and move him som'ers else where they can't find him, iffen they get suspicious and start to dig," she said in her flat, whispered voice.

Andrew shook his head stubbornly. "I won't do ere a thing else. Iffen it's on the cards for the sheriff to take me and break my neck for what I done, I won't try to stop it." Again he shook his head: "No!" he said, "no!" . . . Then, in his despair, he walked to Hallie and caught at her dress.

But Hallie pulled away and turned on him coldly, staring at

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him with unblinking eyes. "I promised not to give you away, and I won't do it either," she said, "but if folks find out, anyway, what you done, and hang you for it, I'll watch you twisting on the rope and laugh."

Andrew drew back suddenly, helpless before her implacable hatred. He knew that there would be no end to her hatred. It would grow, without reason, as the months passed, feeding on itself, until they were both dust together in some field. Even then she would hate him, and her dust would draw away from contact with his own. He stood there for awhile in the yard, thinking these things. Then he opened the gate, and walked to the creek.

Years before, when Lemuel Tallon had first married, he had widened the creek, where it passed through his land, and deepened it by building a dam. The dam had long since rotted away, but a bar of white sand had formed in its place. On three sides, bay trees and dense underbrush grew close to the pool, screening it from the Cornells house and from Thompson's Lane. . . . The sun was far in the west now, and there was promise of a rich sky later. The strong, slanting rays of the sun sifted through the leaves of the trees and spread on the marsh, beneath them, wavering, unexpected designs which shifted with the movement of the branches above: designs so mystic and so unexplainable, that they seemed flashed against the land by a mirror in petulant hands. Above the pool, dragonflies floated, or skimmed its surface, and to the right, a cock yellow-hammer sat high in a sweetgum tree, near his secret nest, and tapped patiently, seeking food.

When Andrew reached the creek, he lay upon the sandbar, his face pressed into his hands. He lay that way, without movement, for a long time. Many things were crowding into his mind from the dark places where he had willed them. He struggled against the compulsion of these things that he wanted to forget, but he was impotent against their power. Vague, incomplete pictures of his father, his mother and his brothers began to emerge in his consciousness and form senseless patterns which began nowhere, and ended, dreamlike, without true termination. . . .

As Andrew lay there on the sand, conscious dimly of the quietness of the pool and of the unending beauty of the sky, a sense of terror because of the inherent evil in men, came over him. . . . Why had Jim treated Hallie so brutally after he had married her? Andrew might have stood anything, except that. He had accepted his defeat at Hallie's hands, and, in time, he might have stopped loving her: He would have been happy merely to have seen her happy! . . . And then for Jim to act the way he had! . . . Many scenes came back to him, which he tried to crush, struggling hopelessly against memory.—Jim drunken and cursing, brutal where

his father and Bradford had been merely playful; vicious where they had only been crude. Jim had got worse and worse as the weeks of his married life went by. He was drunk all the time, now. Andrew would talk to him pleadingly, trying to quiet him. "Don't, Jim!" he would say. . . . "Don't treat her mean!"

And Jim would turn on him in fury. "You take her part, do you?—You take her part against your own brother!"

"It's not that, Jim," he would say in his cloudy, grunting voice. "It's not that: I just can't stand to see you treat her thataway!" . . .

Then Jim laughed bitterly. "After all I've done for you: This is the thanks I get!—This is the thanks I get from my own flesh and blood!" . . . And Andrew would walk away, not knowing how to answer his brother.

At night, Andrew would lock himself in his room, and cover his face with his pillow, but even then he could hear Jim cursing. . . . "You dog bitch!—You whore! . . . You were too good to marry my brother, were you?—You went around laughing at my brother, did you?" . . . Then there would come unending oaths and vulgarity.

"Hush, Jim!" Hallie would say in a shamed voice. "Hush! Folks on the road can hear you!"

"I want them to hear me!" shouted Jim. "I want the whole world to know what a bitch I married!"

Finally Hallie would come to him, pressing her body against his, and Jim, still cursing, but less certain now, would take her in his arms and their lips would meet in their passion.

Then Andrew remembered the night when Hallie had told Jim that she was going to have a baby. At her words, Jim sprang up from the table, upsetting a chair. He began to shout and to wave his arms about:

"You're lying!" he said: "You heerd I was aimin' to leave you and go to Birmingham: You're trying to hold on to me!"

"She's telling the truth, Jim," said Andrew. "I taken her to Reedyville to see Dr. Kent, and he says she's going to have a baby, all right."

But Jim became even wilder at these words. He turned on his brother furiously. . . . "Who give you the right to be takin' my wife around?" Then he paused and his lips twisted. "Maybe it's your baby she's having, you're so God damned interested.—Maybe you and Hallie have been sneaking off to the barn together, when my back was turned."

"It's your baby," said Hallie, "and you know it." She walked toward him, trying to quiet him: "You know it's your baby, Jim!"

Then Jim hit her and she fell over a chair, and on to the floor.

Andrew strode over and caught his brother's upraised arm. "Jim!" he grunted. . . . "Jim!" . . .

But Jim jerked away and went into his bedroom. He took down an old suitcase and began packing it. "I'm clearing out of here," he shouted. "Have your bastard, iffen you want it, but don't put none of my name on to it!"

Hallie crawled toward him, catching at his legs, but Jim drew back his foot and kicked at her savagely. Then, without thought, and without plan, Andrew caught up his brother, lifted him above his head, and hurled him against the floor. Jim got up, stunned and confused. . . . "Good God!—Would hit me?—Would you hit me after all I done for you?" . . . he asked. Then he backed away, frightened before Andrew's wrath. He stumbled, in his haste, across the bed, not seeing it, and the next instant Andrew's hands were around his neck, bending his head backwards over the bed side. Jim twisted and struggled, throwing his legs high into the air, until there came a sound of bone breaking. Then his movements ceased, his legs straightened and stiffened, and his lifeless eyes looked up from the tangled bedclothing.

As Andrew remembered that scene, he rose from the sandbar, and stood there trembling. He had seen the marks on Jim's throat ever since; his swollen tongue; his distorted, agonized face. . . . "Jim!" he said. "I'm sorry I done it, Jim!—I was sorry the minute afterwards!" . . .

Then he sat down again and pressed his face into his hands. A strange despair, dreamlike in its vagueness, in which Hallie, Jim and himself were inextricably together, gnawed at his mind. He understood it but dimly, but he knew that the roots of his misery lay deeply grounded in the past. He realized, if imperfectly, that everything he had ever done or said or thought had been a frail thread, hardly important in itself, which had blown out, like the gossamer weave of a spider, and hung minute and pendulous in the air until a strange wind had caught up the dangling threads, and blown them all together. Then the threads had touched each other and twisted into the rope that now bound him, a rope which no man could break. . . . And so he sat there in the sand, trying to find a reason, a motive, in the past, and not succeeding. . . .

Before him the pool was pleasant and inviting. He got up quickly, upon impulse, and began taking off his clothes. Then he ran forward and dived into it. He came to the surface again and shook his head, grunting like a porpoise. He swam strongly for awhile, splashing the water with his arms, and turning about. Finally he rolled on his back and floated. The hot wind which had blown intermittently all afternoon, began again, and the bay trees, lining the bank, lifted upward, under its

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insistence, and ran in broken patterns of silver. He looked at the young, agitated trees, aware dimly of their beauty, but not caring, until the gust had subsided, and they were lifeless and limp again.

Then, above him, on the projecting limb of a water-oak, a squirrel came out and watched with curiosity. Its baby-like hands were pressed together, in applause, as if it knew some obscure joke at the expense of mankind. Andrew began to tread water and to make a throwing motion at the squirrel, but the unfrightened animal regarded him gravely and jerked its tail from side to side with the precise timing of a metronome. Then Andrew lay again on his back, floating, and looked at the sky. Something in its impersonal serenity alarmed him, suddenly, and he uttered, involuntarily, a despairing noise. The squirrel, alarmed at such a wild, distorted sound, turned quickly and ran across its limb with a movement of uncalculated grace, a slow movement which began at the tip of its nose and flowed undulant, and unchecked, through the whole length of its body. Then Andrew came out of the pool, disappointed that the squirrel had gone away, and lay again on the sandbar, thinking.

The late rays of the sun shone strongly against him, bringing out flaxen tints in the close growing hair that covered his arms and legs. Life should be a sweet thing and yet it turned bitter, inevitably, in the end! . . . He thought, then, of the people whom he had known: his father, his sister Effie, his mother, Hallie and Jim. Their lives should be as simple as the life of the bird that tapped for his supper, or the squirrel who had examined him, unconscious of disaster, its tiny hands patting together.

The squirrel and the bird were doomed, of course, to the same end that all living creatures knew. Their strength lay in the fact that they could not anticipate their oblivion, and that they would not recognize it when it came at last. Only mankind had been cursed with knowledge, and only mankind endeavored, if vainly, to avoid his destiny. . . . Life should be a simple thing, and yet it became confused, in spite of all a man could do! . . . Andrew raised his eyes to the heavens, questioning them, but all he could tell, surely, was that the sky was deeply blue, all one color.

Then, suddenly, he had a sense that the skies held nothing for mankind; were empty of all meaning. . . . People were born in sorrow and moved about the world in senseless patterns of sorrow, without guidance and without plan. He lay there on the sand thinking these things. . . . Man was no more important to the creator of the earth than the trees or the vegetation which he had also created. There was no gentle eye to watch him, no indulgent hand to direct him, and no preferred fate for

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him, at last. . . . A man had to accept that fact, whether it pleased him or not!—A man must realize, sooner or later, his haphazard fate! . . .

These recurring thoughts kept coming up from the core of his being to trouble him. He tried to banish them, to think of other things, but his mind turned, inevitably, to himself. . . . Why should nature have cursed him with a deformity which would make the woman he was destined to love turn away from him, if, as it appeared, the sole plan of nature was irrational fertility? . . . In his loins there were many children which Hallie, eventually, might have borne.—And why, in turn, should Hallie desire Jim?—What was there different between them? They were both men. They were, actually, the same flesh and the same blood. . . . He twisted about on the bar of white sand, beating it, but he could find no answers to his questions. Then, because a man in pain must make a sound, he began to laugh.

Above him, on the hill, Hallie was preparing supper. Two threads of smoke arose from the chimney, one pale gray and one pale blue. These threads touched each other for an instant, touched, clung, drew away and touched again, and wrinkled imperceptibly into nothingness.

As Andrew lay there watching the smoke, and thinking his thoughts, a sense of chill came over him. He put on his clothes and beat his arms against his breast, but the faint iciness persisted. He began to move about aimlessly, without direction, trying to bring warmth into his blood again, and not succeeding. . . . A man was a fool if he thought he could defeat his destiny: A man might go any way he chose, but at the end of his path the thing he sought to avoid would be waiting for him. The sensible thing was to get it done quickly! He knew then what he was going to do.

He ran up the knoll, past the burying ground and through the trees, a sense of relief in his heart. When he reached the house, Hallie was setting the table for supper. She turned and looked at him for a moment, and then went on with her work.

"I'm a-goin' to tell folks I killed Jim," he said. He stood against the door-sill, rolling his head from side to side.

"Drink some hot coffee," said Hallie. "You act cold."

But Andrew shook his head. He walked out of the kitchen and into the yard. On the road puffs of red smoke still rose above the crepe-myrtle trees, but less frequently now, as the last people returned from Gramlings store to their homes. He watched the puffs for a moment, before he walked through the grove of oaks and stood by the roadside, his body trembling a little. In the distance, two brown mules, drawing a green wagon, were approaching. When the wagon was almost upon

him, he walked to the middle of the road and held up his hand. Holm Barrascale pulled up his team suddenly, surprised, but he did not speak.

His wife, Alice, turned her whole bent body to look at this strange, shivering figure standing before them in the road.

"Why, what's the matter, Andrew?" she asked. "You act like you got a chill."

Andrew held on to the side of the wagon and clamped his jaws, to end the chattering of his teeth. "Listen carefully to what I say," he said. "Listen and tell the sheriff: I killed Jim and buried him in the Delta Patch."

Holm Barrascale jumped out of his wagon and came over to him, and the Barrascale grandchildren stared with their mouth open, unable to take in the meaning of these words.

"I killed Jim on the road one night over a debt of money," said Andrew. Then he continued, cunningly: "Hallie ain't in no way responsible: She thinks Jim run off to Birmingham and left her."

An automobile had driven up during that time, and Andrew repeated the story to Ed and Addie Wrenn. Addie's tiny mouth drew tight, and the fine, radiating lines that surrounded it, stood out.

"Andrew!—Andrew!" she said. "You're out of your mind, baby! You don't know what you're saying: You couldn't a-done a thing like that!"

She came over to Andrew and put her frail arm about him, trying to look into his face. "Say you're lying, Andrew!" she pleaded.—"Say it's not the truth!"

Then she turned to Russ Glover and his family, who had just driven up. "I don't believe ere a word of it!" she said. "It just ain't possible.—Why I was in the room when Andrew was born.—I helped his ma nurse him, when he was a baby. He used to lie in my lap when I was dressing him and laugh and play with his toes. Then he'd raise his hands and pet my cheek. . . . I don't believe ere a word of it!" she repeated stubbornly.. "A baby as sweet and innocent as that couldn't do such a terrible thing!"

"I done it, all right," said Andrew.

He turned and walked back to the gate, and stood there. He had nothing further to tell these people. When he looked at the road again, from the cover of the oak grove, he saw that Lafe Cornells had driven up, and that Holm Barrascale and Russ Glover were talking to him excitedly. In an hour everybody in the county would know the story. Later that night, the sheriff would come and take him. He rested his shaking body against a tree. . . . Let them come quickly!

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Hallie met him at the steps. "What's done is done," she said. "You didn't help matters none by telling."

"I said you didn't know Jim was dead," he grunted. "I didn't want to get you in trouble, honey!" Then he touched her hand timidly, but Hallie drew away from him. "Come inside," she said, "and eat your supper. You'll need a hot supper."

But Andrew shook his head. The sudden chill which had come over him, as he lay by the creek, came back, intensified. He walked to the stove, pressing his body against it, but there was no warmth in it for him. His hands were blue with chill and wet with congealed moisture, like the outside of a water-cooler.

"You better drink some hot coffee," said Hallie without looking at him. "You got a rigor."

Andrew turned away. He knew that nothing would ever warm him again. He walked to the barn aimlessly, no clear purpose in his mind. When he reached it, old Babe came out of her stall and sniffed him, and Andrew put his arm about her neck, hugging her for warmth; but his trembling persisted. The sun had set now, and outside the sky was gray and pink, like flames struggling through new wood ashes, but in the barn it was so dusky that the stalls and the cribs melted and flowed together.

Then, in sudden, unreasoning terror, Andrew ran out of the barn, straight for the unploughed patch. The last year's stalks made a brittle sound as he brushed them with his clothes. Occasionally he reached out and grasped at the dead growth: The withered bolls were as hard to his hand as dried chestnut burrs.

When he reached the center of the patch, he flung himself downward over the exact spot where Jim lay buried. He said: "I told them I done it Jim: that's all I can do now!" Then he raised upward like a fish impaled on a hook and swayed his body from side to side. He lowered himself again and hugged the earth tightly, his fists clenched together, but his body continued to jerk with cold and his teeth still chattered.

He understood, then, the basis of his chill: No man could walk through the world without love. A man was not complete in himself; could not stand alone. . . . But two bodies locked together in love, their parts interpenetrated in love, were entire: They could stand together against a strong wind, fortifying and buttressing each other, although either, alone, was incomplete and sorry. He understood, also, that no man may escape love, and that no man may defeat it.

Suddenly he got up, and began running about in circles, like a man demented, pulling up armfuls of the dead stalks and flinging them into the air with wide gestures; and as suddenly he lay twisting upon the

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earth again. When he next looked up, he saw Hallie come out of the house and walk toward him through the yard, her big hips vibrating, her breasts jumping upward like rabbits under the flimsy covering of her dress. She reached the fence and stopped there, and stared at him with her hard, undecided look. Her hair had become loosened with her exertion, and hung about her shoulders. Her full, humid lips were half-opened.

Andrew stood upright among the stalks and watched her with loving eyes. . . . "What makes everything so mixed up?" he asked in his choked, gasping voice. Then he added: "Hallie!—Hallie! Why couldn't you have loved me, honey?" . . . But Hallie, if she heard him, made no sign. She leaned across the rails and stared into space. Her sullen face was set and without kindness. Then Andrew threw himself flat upon the earth again, pressing against it.

To the east, behind the trees which marked the limits of the Cornells' land, a moon colored like an orange was rising. The moon seemed caught in the web of the trees, and unable to escape them. Then, imperceptibly, it lifted clear of the entangling branches, and swung upward, washing the woodland and the quiet fields richly with a yellow light.

Hallie looked upward toward the rising moon, thinking her thoughts, which were bitter. Before her, Andrew lay, inert and quiet now among the growing cotton. Each was conscious of the presence of the other, and yet neither spoke. They remained that way for a long time.

There were people running toward the patch from all directions: through the oak grove; from behind the house; over the foot-bridge that spanned the creek; across the blooming cotton. . . . Three men came up to Hallie. She turned her head slowly and recognized Lister Wentworth, sheriff of Pearl County, with two of his deputies. "I come to arrest Andrew Tallon for the murder of his brother," he said; "it'll be better if he don't make no trouble."

People were crowding behind Lister, a multitude of people, their faces eager with their excitement, their breathing quick and audible. Hallie brushed back her dangling hair and lifted her arm.

"There he is," she said, pointing to the patch. "Go take him, iffen you want him." Then she said a thing which she, herself, did not entirely understand, and which her audience understood not at all: "He's lying on top of his brother, at last. . . . If Jim was alive, he'd like that, I think!"

She turned, contemptuously, and walked, without a word, through the crowd, looking neither to the right nor to the left, until she reached her house, and entered it.

VAMP TILL READY

C. A. Millspaugh

Lake waves roll on mud;
weeds stuck, fettered in the middle, wave;
waves click low scales, mudmuted:
the shadows squirm in grass.
I, faceframed with light, swing in memory
with trees and yellow flowers;
stung by turf, my body rolls in rest,
sees wires tremble through green flick of leaves,
hears roads whirl on tires and poles whisk
in quick puffs; hands beat, transfer 27 germ diseases,
and clench close. Fire in the darkness of closed eyes
reviews far images that months wrought
and held their words to wake here.
I move to change the world,
but memory hoots with horns and holds;
yellow flowers in my hands, song on my eyes;
shadows click, squirm on waves, hoot with horns.

Dance E SI DOLCE MEMORIE: Graves flirts batons.

Band This fruiter, mouth a-wabble, whispers,
and with head hung, asks. Trumpeter of pain,
dosed for a month now, sick, he trumpets clear
tall ripped notes. Notes fall and they fall and fall
like streetcar noise around my feet.
Seraphims slink sleepily to sleep across the stars.

I, boy of nuns, acolyte-lipper of candle flames;
I, mad with noise, a tube of notes, lipper of clarinets;
make tunes. Sleek notes lick silk legs
beyond mine eyes. *O the Glory sings upon me.*
The niggerwench sings mad stinking songs
and afterwards some black place someplace
on a place of pain, nostrils wrench on hot shoulders.
O angels, you can have your golden hair.
Blond, with air and bearing of the sun,

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the Anderson kid bums his way to Graves
who necks him after hours.
He knew why he squirted sodas.
Sing, sing, sing under trees
stand on the bluffs and weep.
Playing steamed music on the floor,
I, mad, more mad, tempo-lost in screams
that swilled the room, scorch a tune
in notes of cupping-glass and hot. *The Glory Sings.*
Graves' room stirs in dense nasturtium.
"Come be nice to me." I smiled, but a long while crying;
a long while before I hit him with a crock.
ET J'ENTENDIS UNE GRANDE VOIX.
I swim and make up tunes in my head,
squirm in the sand and make up poems.
He says nothing, whines like a little girl,
and bleeds in the nasturtium smell.

I laugh and make up singing in my head.
The drummer combs his hair and goes to bed.
Play and scowl in the swayed-swung moon.
Fret my hands on the sore bent sky.
These are dreams, and the songs are dreams.

The The professor grins at race riots, blinks, and draws
cloister into a phallic symbol, weeps for miners.
of I HAVE AN UNWHOLESOME MEMORY OF
learning MANKIND'S RIGHTS.

Saint Paul's is wonderful and so is Notre Dame,
but there is sweat on the buttresses of Chartres.
Pioneers hew trees, trek in two migrations,
hewing trees. The weak pave Boston, win the race.
Old age without a knowledge of the classics is a living hell.
Folk songs stroll out every open doorway
with the world in their hands,
the mountains in their notes.
Soon, o soon, tomorrow, o tomorrow, these faces
will pour upon us in their aged wrath.
Dante in an old maid's mouth is dead.
Paris from a map; Berlin from a grammar.
Elocutionary maids mouth Tasso;

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Milton with the face of Graves.

30 a week and fruiterers for the arts.

All these are dead, my quiet one;
all these are leaden-written, past all eyes.
These are corpses, still and shattered songs
I charge thee when thou wake the multitude
Thou lead them not upon the paths of blood.

Father E SI TANTA FEDE: The undertaker bails him out.
and son. Tears sweep glass-hewn cheeks,
torn by windshieldglass, where Christ was standing.
Jesus comes like thunder in January
where chunks of flesh cling on the glass,
and fat catalpas bloom like girls.
The wind sings on larvae in the water,
lacewing bugdust floats windwritten.
L'automne, l'automne, l'automne.
He, fingercracking, sniffles in the dark,
"Gottadoit gottasignthis, son, gottasign.
They're gointogetme. Christ—you gottasign.
Go to county for your food. Jesus—sign.
Gottahavthemoney. Godalmighty—sign."
Tears on his shoes, bonefingers pulling sleeves,
his frightened smile and gottasignthis.

Weeping wires over broken shells.

(*E si lungo costume.*)

Postlude Soft flesh with music on it spreads,
eyed flesh, felt flesh, velvet tones and moments
stretched in tones, in rest—cantabile of breasts,
concerto of arms and knees.
Moments on the hills, under the trees, on grass,
on convex inflorescence, under screaming kites.
I play for flesh, weave arpeggios, cut and riddled, on it;
sing for it, make legs tremble;
sandsquirm with fluted flesh in frightful silence.

O my quiet one,
these are the glories. This, the golden hair.



THREE SISTERS

Charles Kendall O'Neill

We had just finished a late dinner and were smoking at one of the tables in the big room of the fonda when the miller came in. Maria was by the door and he talked to her for a minute and then came over to our table.

"Will you take coffee with me?" he asked in French.

We nodded, pointed to a chair and called Maria. She brought us three coffees without milk and we discussed the weather in a mixture of French and Spanish. If it hadn't been so long since the Romans were in Urba, the miller would have managed to work in a few scraps of Latin.

"Have you things to do tonight?" he asked.

At the next table three fishermen were shouting and beating the table in an argument. The miller didn't argue. He owned the town feed and grain store.

"We are closed for the day," I said. "What do you suggest?"

"You would like to see some girls?"

"What kind of girls?"

"Three sisters in a store and their mother."

We'd struck Urba de Mallorca during Carnival and there had been fiestas and dancing every night but for almost a week now the town had been deep in Lent. We were open for any proposition.

"I'd like to go," I said. "What do you say, Joe?"

"I don't think they'll fight," he said, looking at the next table. "Sure, I'd like to go."

We finished off our cups and went out into the street. It was dark and there were only a few people in the square. The miller led us by a side street and stopped in front of a small store. There were shirts and rope and shoes and jars of olive oil in the window. The miller knocked on the door. He put his face close to the glass and peered through into the darkened store front while we were waiting. He stepped back as the doorknob turned. A black haired girl with a dark face looked out through the half opened door.

"Bonanit," said the miller.

The girl saw us and changed the Mallorcan to Spanish.

"Buenas noches," she said. "Will you come in?"

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"These are North Americans, Jose and Carlos," he said. "This is Carlota."

Her teeth were very white against the brown of her face. We shook hands.

"We will come in," he said.

We passed through the store under strings of little tomatoes, past counters piled high with boxes of goods. The mother and the other daughters were sitting around a pan of red coals in the room in back of the store. They stood up as we entered the room. The mother's face was fine-lined and beautiful under her black kerchief.

The miller seemed to have the standing of an old friend. He laughed at the youngest girl as she bent to pick up a piece of sewing that had fallen from her lap when she stood up.

"Jose and Carlos," he said, "this is Antonia and this is Teresa."

"We have pleasure," I said.

We shook hands with the three.

"This is your home," said the mother. "Will you sit down?"

The daughters drew up three more chairs and the seven of us sat down around the fire. Carlota was between the miller and me with Teresa, the youngest, on my right and Joe between the mother and Antonia. Carlota, the oldest, didn't look more than twenty-two. Antonia was more plump than the others and had the only light hair in the family. She would have been beautiful except for a slight cross in her eyes. She smiled often but with an embarrassment that I thought was from her eyes. Teresa hardly seemed Spanish at all. She was slender and her hair was brown rather than black. Her eyes were bright and lively and when she smiled it would be sudden and her eyes smiled too and then she would turn and look away from me to her mother. When she talked she lifted her face up and held her head cocked a little to one side. I liked her right away.

"I saw you walking the other night with Raphael's sister," I said to her.

She looked up and tossed her head.

"We were coming home from the sermons," she said. "Almost every night in Lent there are sermons."

"That is very depressing," I said.

She laughed and the mother clicked her tongue and shook her finger.

"Urba, do you like it?" asked Carlota. She had been saying something to the miller in Mallorcan.

"Yes," said Joe.

"Very much," I said. "You see we are here."

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"It is too small for you," said Teresa.

"No, no," I said. "We can work well and the people have good hearts."

Carlota's smile broke for a moment.

"Do you find it that way?"

"Very much so."

"It makes me happy," she said.

Antonia pushed her chair back and went over to the corner for some more charcoal. She spread a few pieces over the fire and raked the ashes a little with the small shovel.

"And the girls here," said Carlota, "do you like them?"

"How can we save ourselves from it?" I asked.

"All beautiful," said Joe. "All beautiful."

Carlota tossed her head and looked at the miller.

"Jaime doesn't find them beautiful," she said.

Jaime laughed and winked at Antonia.

"He has a sweetheart in Puebla," Carlota said. "But to me there is no interest in this."

"She is very beautiful, this girl of his," I said.

"Have you seen her?" asked Teresa.

"What does she look like?" asked Carlota.

I looked over at the miller. He was grinning.

"Is she tall?" asked Carlota.

"Greatly tall," I said. "I saw her standing by his car one day in Puebla."

"Dark or fair?"

"Her hair is very yellow. She is also very beautiful. All her teeth are gold."

"All of them gold?" asked Carlota.

"I don't know whether I should tell all this," I said.

The miller shrugged his shoulders in resignation.

"Tell them everything," he said.

"She has a wooden leg," I said. "But you would never notice it she is so beautiful."

Carlota kicked her foot against the pan in annoyance.

"You have not seen her at all," she said. "But it is nothing. I have no interest in how she looks."

The miller pushed her and he and Teresa laughed. Even the mother smiled at her. Teresa said something and pushed her chair back. She came back from the other room with a tray. There was a wine bottle and some little glasses and a plate of galletas. We each had a little

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glass of the malaga and some of the cookies. The wine was a little sweet and we had to refuse the second time. Carlota had part of a glass but Teresa and Antonia didn't take any.

We talked some more and no one seemed to know what to do and Jaime suggested a game. It seemed to be the Mallorcan for post office or spin the bottle. They made Antonia lead it. She counted around on the knees singing 'peek-peek-poka-reek . . . gamma . . . gamma . . . ' and some more which I could't catch. It sounded like eenie-meenie-minie-mo.

"How do you say mere in Spanish?" said Joe. "I want to tell them I played this when I was a mere boy."

"Shut up," I said.

Whenever the count ended on a knee, the knee had to be drawn and it kept up until two knees of everybody had been touched. Teresa's left knee won.

We didn't know quite what was up but Teresa whispered something to the miller leaning across the fire and he took Carlota's hand and kissed it. Carlota blushed and everyone except the mother laughed at her. Then Teresa leaned across me to whisper to Carlota and Carlota slapped the miller a good one across the ear. We clapped and Joe shook hands with Teresa. I had to sing a song in Spanish and I got halfway through *Donde Estas Corazon* before Joe stopped me. Teresa tried to whisper Joe's forfeit to him but he couldn't understand and I had to translate.

"She wants you to declare your love for Antonia in English."

"That's a hell of a thing to have to do," said Joe.

He pulled back his chair and dropped down on one knee with his hand over his heart.

"Shucks, Nell," he said, "I'm not much of a hand for words."

He drew the words out and sighed deeply. Antonia blushed and shook her finger back and forth.

Teresa clapped her hands.

"What does he say?"

"He says he loves her as the waves love the shore," I said.

"Muy bien," said the miller. "I don't believe it."

Antonia's forfeit was to sing and she didn't want to at first but we all said she had to and finally she sang. She had been shaking her head and smiling her embarrassed smile while she refused but when she started singing she stopped smiling and looked down at the floor. Her voice was surprisingly low and clear. She sang *Yira* and *Negra Consentida* and then we made her sing *La Paloma*. It took her to the middle of a song to get any confidence in herself and then it was beautiful. After *La Paloma* we couldn't get her to sing any more.

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The miller told about a German who tried to buy oats from him to make oatmeal. He couldn't understand oats being used for anything but animals. Teresa showed us some pictures she'd taken the summer before at the fiesta of the Virgin of Victoria. We recognized some of the young men and girls we'd met in town. In one picture, the zaranga was playing and some of the old people were dancing the old dances. There was some more talk and we saw that it was past eleven and we said we had to go. The miller said something to the mother about grain and we all stood up. We shook hands all around and Teresa and Carlota walked to the door of the darkened shop with the three of us.

"You won't come back," said Carlota.

"Without fail," I said, "You have been fine to us."

"Whenever you want to," said Teresa. "Our house is yours."

We found Erling next morning down at the port. He was out on the muelle watching the lobster catch being packed for the Barcelona boat. There were two of the big storing boxes drawn up to the key. They were almost submerged and full of water and kicking lobsters. I caught hold of Joe's shoulder and leaned out to look. The box was about eight feet by four and there must have been nearly a hundred lobsters inside. They weren't the kind that we were used to in New England, the ones with the big claws, but they were about the same size. They were more like giant shrimps. A prehistoric looking crab with long legs and a lot of sharp armor was pushing around on the bottom of the box. He looked lonely and confused.

The men were fishing them out of the box with a hand net and folding them into ice in the packing chests. When they handled them, the lobsters doubled up and kicked with a noise like creaking leather harness. One of them fell from the net and kicked around on the ground until Erling picked it up and put it into the chest.

"You've been up early," said Joe.

"Since before seven," said Erling. "They've had heavy luck this week. Good beginning for the season."

Erling was a Norwegian politician and ex-newspaper editor who had been living with the fishermen in the port for nearly two years. His hoarse, lusty English was almost faultless.

We sat down on some empty chests to watch the work. The man putting the lobsters in the ice was wearing a patched pair of faded pink pants. He had the chest nearly full.

"We were over at the three sisters' last night," said Joe.

"Up in Urba?"

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"The ones who have the store. Carlota and Teresa and Tonia. Tonia is a little bit cross eyed. We went there with the miller."

Erling looked up at us.

"You know them, don't you?" I asked.

"Yes, I know them," said Erling. "Their father is a fisherman. He's in that boat over there now, unloading nets."

We looked over. A tall, thin fisherman with hair just going gray was pulling away at the brown wet pile of nets in his boat. His face was narrow and I thought I could see something of Teresa in his quick, abrupt movements.

"Teresa moves like that," I said. "But she isn't brown."

"Teresa hasn't gone out to sea all the days for thirty years," said Erling.

"I expect she'll get a good husband one of these days," I said.

"Why?" asked Erling.

"You can see yourself," said Joe. "She's a fine kid."

"She's pretty and she's bright, too," I said.

"And Carlota's putting out the nets for the miller," said Joe.

"There will be no wedding for them here," said Erling.

The words came out sharp and angry.

"Why not?"

He looked surprised.

"You don't know about Antonia?"

"No," I said. "Except that she's got a fine voice."

He lunged up and pulled me by the arm.

"We will walk out to the end of the muelle," he said.

We got up and walked along with him.

"No better girls are in town," he said, "and no boy here can make marriage with them. You were here during Carnival. Did you see them at the dances?"

"I don't remember them," said Joe.

"Because they weren't there," said Erling. "Carlota and Teresa went with their aunt one night to Puebla for dancing. One dance."

We stopped at the end of the muelle and stood looking down at the rocks. A school of tiny clay-colored fish streaked away as we came. Erling stood with his hands on his hips, looking across to the mountains on the other side of the bay.

"Two years ago, Antonia and a boy here were courting, were novios," he said. "I thought somebody would have told you. Antonia was too much woman to wait for marriage. It was early spring like now."

The sun was splintering into bits of light on the choppy water.

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"That's not the average thing here. It surprises the man. I thought it was beautiful as hell in her."

Erling's voice seemed hoarser than usual.

"Then the boy spent a night with a woman over in Pollensa. Tonia found it out. There was an old gun of her father's. She shot herself in the head. The scar is on the left side, back of the ear. I don't think you can see it now. The father was the first to come on her. He shouted. There was a doctor here then and Teresa ran in her nightshirt to call him. When he came he found the father making heavy blows on Antonia with a strap. Much blood from the head had run down the back and the strap was red and wet. They say he tried to hit the doctor too."

He kicked a rock and it must have hurt his foot. We turned to walk back along the quay.

"Walls push people together," said Erling. "Whenever they tear down old houses in Urba they find closed up passages in the cellars. You can see all houses are built together with small windows at the street. If the Moors passed the walls they still could not get into the houses. With the passages between the houses, each street was a fort. There is no change. The town is still all one house. All things are known immediately."

It took me three matches to light my cigarette.

"Was she going to have a baby?" asked Joe.

"No," said Erling. "The boy must have been smart. They took her to the hospital in Palma. In two months she was better but all the world knew she had been with a lover without first going to the priests. All people think now that the three sisters are prostitutes."

"That goes for all three of them?"

"Antonia, Teresa, Carlota, the same."

"The miller goes there," said Joe.

"The miller is open for any deal. He goes to see what there is to get."

"What happened to the man?" I asked.

"He went to Palma that week to work in a hotel."

"Why didn't they do something to him?"

"How can I know?" said Erling.

The man in the faded pink pants dropped another lobster. It kicked around in the dust. I looked down the muelle. The tall fisherman was stooped over, unrolling the wet pile of net.

"The nets have to be mended two or three times a week," said Erling. "They are always breaking."



EPITHALAMION

J. V. Cunningham

Partitioned by his saber, love
Is ghostly with platonic souls
Leaping, unbodied, star to star.
Spirit is likened to a breath,
But keeps no vigils with the wind;
Marriage is not concordant speech,
But faith on superstitious terms.

Read never, now that you are wed,
The moves we made in fools'-mate haste.
When bony craters fix your eyes,
When blood stirs stupidly to sense,
Think not, the midnight you are strung,
Pimpled with chill and plucked like fowl,
Here you had missed the market place.



THE DOCTOR

Albert Halper

The tall, thin girl who had found out that she was pregnant put her hat and coat on and told her sister she was going for a walk. She went outside, walking carefully, because the street was icy, and turned north at the next corner.

Above the drug-store was the doctor's office and a big sign there swung in the wind. The tall, thin girl crossed over, made her steps slower as she came near the entrance, and walked by. Her heart was pounding. She walked around the block, seeing the hardened snow upon the front lawns, and when she came back to the doctor's corner the wind was blowing and her face was dry and red looking.

This time she stopped before the door, turned the knob and walked the flight up to the doctor's office. The doctor's wife, a small, plump woman of about thirty, answered the bell.

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"Is Doctor Solin in?" the tall girl asked.

"Yes," said the doctor's wife and went into another room to call her husband who was reading the sports section of the newspaper. The doctor was a six-day bicycle race fan and grumbled often to his wife that he couldn't attend all the races because his patients needed him.

"There's a patient waiting," his wife said quietly.

The doctor put his paper down and got to his feet. He was a big, heavy fellow of about thirty-five and very settled looking. Laying his cigar aside, he put on his long white apron and stood still while his wife hooked it from the back. Then, frowning slightly, he walked briskly into his office.

"Come in," he said to the tall, thin girl who sat in the hall which served as the reception room.

The girl went into the office and the doctor closed the door.

The doctor sat silent and listened while the girl told him all about it. He could tell instantly she was a decent girl and came from a good family. At first she stammered a bit, but after a while spoke evenly. She sat with her hands in her lap.

When the girl finished talking there was a long pause. The doctor, sitting in the big, wide chair near the desk, leaned back and stared at the ceiling for a while. He told the girl it was against the law for him to do anything, there was a heavy penalty and perhaps imprisonment if he were found out.

"I can't do anything," he said. "I'm sorry," and he saw how disappointed and lonely she suddenly became.

But something in his attitude and the way he sat and looked sympathetically at her made the girl feel that the interview was not yet over. She began talking again.

The doctor sat without saying anything more, turning in his chair slowly, so that he could look out the office windows.

"I've got money of my own in the bank," the girl said. "No one will have to know."

The doctor continued to stare thoughtfully toward the windows. It was Saturday afternoon and the papers predicted a big jam at the bike races for the evening crowds.

The girl went on talking. Her tone changed and she began to plead. She was not accustomed to pleading and her face grew a trifle distorted with feeling as she spoke. Afterwards she blew her nose softly and sat staring at her knees.

Finally the doctor cleared his throat. He was sure of his ground now. He told her he was taking a big chance, it might mean jail for him,

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but he'd see what he could do. Then he paused and the girl asked a question.

"Oh, no," answered the doctor, "I'm sorry, but I myself can't do it. I have a friend, another doctor who lives on the South Side. I'll call him up and ask him if he'll do it."

The girl grew a trifle excited; she stood up and wanted the doctor to call his friend right away, but the doctor said he couldn't do that.

"Drop in tomorrow morning before noon," the doctor said. "I'll be able to tell you then."

The girl hesitated; tomorrow was Sunday and on Sunday morning she always went to church with her sister and her sister's husband, but, turning to the doctor, she said she would drop in before noon. As she stood up to go she opened her purse, but the doctor smiled.

"That's all right," he said, and she closed it again.

This made the girl feel so grateful that her eyes grew blurry and, speaking with a sudden rush, she thanked the doctor again and again, her voice breaking occasionally. He swung the door open for her, stood tall and heavy and sympathetic, and listened to her rapid footsteps as she went down the stairs to the street.

Afterwards he called to his wife to help him with the apron and then he sat in the parlor, reading the paper again. His wife went back to the kitchen where she had been preparing supper.

When the meal was ready she called and the doctor laid the paper down. His wife was a fine cook and he felt good as he drew up a chair and sniffed the food. Cutting a small corner from the piece of hot, browned steak, he told his wife about the patient who had just left a short while ago. The meat was good.

"If Doctor Alexander gets a good price from her he ought to give you more than he did last time," said the doctor's wife.

The doctor, who did not like his wife to tell him how to manage things, said nothing. Cutting another corner of steak carefully he continued to chew in silence.

The next morning was clear and cold. At ten o'clock sharp the bell rang and the tall, thin girl came up, her eyes a trifle shiny from the frost. The doctor himself answered the door and told her to sit down in his office while he finished answering a phone call from a patient who was suffering from violent head-aches. After he hung up he went inside the office where they sat talking for five minutes, and when the door opened again and they came out the girl thanked him once more, with feeling and warmth. She shook the doctor's hand and her eyes grew misty and

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finally she had to gnaw her lip, she was so grateful. Then she hurried down the stairs.

Three days later Doctor Alexander, who has offices on the South Side of the city and who employed two very efficient nurses all the time because business was good, mailed a check to Doctor Colin. Doctor Colin tore the letter open and was not satisfied with the amount, so he phoned Doctor Alexander and told him so. He spoke for twenty minutes with Doctor Alexander, while his wife came from the kitchen and stood near his elbow, listening. And in the next morning's mail another check came.

A week went by.

Then another letter arrived, a letter from the tall, thin girl. She wrote that because she had been so happy she had forgotten to write sooner, so the doctor must excuse her. "You don't know how relieved I am, doctor. My sister doesn't know anything about it. I'm so glad I came up to see you and for some reason or other I feel more grateful to you than I do to Doctor Alexander. Maybe it's because you told me you had to talk so hard to him, to get his consent. But I'm so very happy now, doctor, and I shall always be grateful for what you have done. Please, when you pass me in the neighborhood, don't recognize me. But I know you won't, anyway. You went through all that trouble on my account without taking anything so I know you'll never say a word about this to anybody."

There was no signature.

The doctor was alone in his office when he read the letter. He read it twice. Then he went to stand near the window and stared up the street, one fist holding the letter, the other in his trouser pocket.

A thin, fine snow was falling and two fat, old ladies were carrying bundles from the butcher-shop around the corner. The doctor stood there musingly, while the street grew whiter and whiter.

When the door opened and his wife, carrying groceries, returned from her shopping, the doctor felt a trifle irritated because she had forgotten to bring home the afternoon paper.

Along the curb, the wind coming from the west blew the powdered snow quietly forward, fanning it across the Kedzie Avenue car tracks.



RAILROAD JOURNEY

Millen Brand

There is serenity in this slow gliding
under deep hills. The curve of train ahead
passes a few freight cars left on a siding
which now obscure the land view and the bled
sky which drains to night. The curving train
straightens and goes clicking ahead. A blare
of slow-drawn notes, three or four, stain
this total peace and touch the precarious air.
Near trees whirl fast and far more lovely far
trees eddy gently on the hollow space
above the sun. Even steeples are
pointed to beauty on this hollow place.
Night gradually draws its curtains on the train
which hands at every window raise in vain.



THE ENDLESS LANE

George F. Meeter

In the kitchen the woman stood ironing, methodically, and the sameness of the experience left her thoughts a liberal detachment. She worked near the open window; it was March and a little blustery still, yet in the air were signs of the inevitable struggle, rifts in the long frozen atmosphere through which crept some suggestion of soft new fragrance.

Bella could never quite lose her excitement and uneasy ecstasy during this emergence of spring from under the hard iron crust of winter. Afterward it was always so balmy, so yielding: the rain, buds bursting, grass turning greener, sprouting—all that part of spring suggested gentle triumph, a task well and simply done. But in the first stages of struggle there was nothing gentle about it, nor, she felt, was the task simple.

It was hard, bitter, relentless strife, and underneath the crust of earth was waged a titanic effort, a mighty upheaval of earth's elements for the

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power to burst such fetters and emerge triumphantly reaching for the sun. Thus she felt, working, and felt as well that this must be a universal communication in spring: witnessed in strange yearnings, in unrest and uncertainty and the idea of illimitable wells of energy that in some way had to be tapped . . . Bella always possessed, at this time of the year, the most absurd desire to grow back along the way she had come, growing a year younger instead of a year older from one spring to the next and in that way slyly but surely regaining her youth. The ridiculous impulse was with her now, this blustery morning in late March, and with it an idle yet warm wonder as to her husband: where he might be at this precise moment, what he might be doing. She did not, as once upon a time, glance through the window while thinking. . . .

In the first weeks of disappearance (eviction?) she had looked for his return almost daily. But then the thought had become less recurrent; with six months' absence the old expectancy had dissolved almost completely. Now she hummed as she worked, and when the knock sounded she crossed the room with the small tune unstilled in her throat. But with the door opened, with him in front of her, staring, she stood tuneless and speechless and merely stared back.

In six months his appearance had changed. His eyes watered, not on tears but somewhat blearedly, and beneath was creased a network of fine wrinkles. Hollows had flattened in his cheeks, and newly scored lines ran to the corners of his mouth, which sagged slightly open. Upon his face too was a thin stubble, as if shaving had become a rather careless function. There were other impairments: the same clothes but more threadbare at collar and cuff now, and rumpled and dust stained. His shoes were quite worn, the trousers baggy. What incalculable decay had taken place inwardly could be determined only by appearance, yet the deterioration seemed to be great, so that in the woman's piercing scrutiny the other looked older by ten times six months.

The infinity of the moment became finite and she spoke. "Where have you been?" The question sounded inane even to her.

"Been? Oh, just around." Even the voice carried a hoarse timbre. Out of bibulous eyes he peered as he added: "I've never been far, you know."

The sense of the words made her forget their inflection and she was aware of a sudden curious resentment. He had been close, while she had thought of him as being far away; so close, and without sign of any kind.

"Why have you come back . . . at last?"

"To tell the truth I don't know. To see you, I guess." But in his eyes shone no excitement; he swayed, watching her unconcernedly. The

woman returned the stare steadily and in time his eyes held some deeper light.

"Aren't you going to invite me in even?" He was trying to don his old air of nonchalance but it was a pitiful attempt. She stepped aside, and then in the hallway he paused. "Anyone else home now?"

"No. Ella'll be home for lunch, but the others—you know very well they won't be home until supertime. Why?"

"Oh, just curious. Say Belle, you couldn't fry me some eggs or something? And a cup of coffee maybe? It's a little chilly out."

"Yes, I guess I could do that." They were walking to the kitchen now. "Lon, why didn't you send for your clothes after—leaving?"

"Just didn't bother. I've been in Baltimore again for a while—stayed with dear sister Maggie, you see."

"How is she—how's everyone down there?"

"All right. But they're not so hot on me, especially Mag's husband. He's another of these birds too strict about his fellowmen."

"Were you working down there?"

"Yes. In a stone yard, until last week. Then we had one more falling out over Mister Barleycorn and I jacked up. Had to beat my way up here, and believe me it was a cold trip! Went up to Paddy Ryan's saloon—I mean speakeasy—in New York and got a dollar to bring me out to Long Island."

She studied him covertly as he talked, busying herself at stove and table. His face was shaded with the rum color all right.

"What do you mean to do now—work in New York?"

"I don't know. Maybe yes, maybe no. Paddy told me about a job up in Monahan's yard in the Bronx . . . say, you remember Monahan, who was going to take me in partnership about—let's see, ten years ago; remember?"

"Could I ever—forget?"

There was a long pause then; through it could be heard the sizzling of eggs frying and the steaming of the coffee water.

"Ah, well . . . gee, those eggs smell good, Belle! Y' know, I ain't had anything to eat since yesterday when I hopped a freight at Wilmington."

There had been two eggs in the pan but now the woman added as many, and also brought several boiled potatoes from the refrigerator.

"Why didn't you buy something with the dollar Paddy gave you?"

"Well, you see—I was afraid I wouldn't have gotten here then."

She was busy at the stove and did not look up. "Where did you leave your tools—in Baltimore?"

"No. I had them shipped to Paddy's before leaving."

"Then you don't intend going back there at all?"

"Well, not for a while. The place, or maybe it's the people, don't agree with me. Or I with them—whichever way you look at it. Maybe I'll jump somewhere though . . . my foot still itches, Belle."

The coffee and food were ready now and the woman dimmed the burner. Bread, butter, various articles were set forth, and at last the man was eating hungrily. Meanwhile his wife sat in perfect silence and watched him.

She watched him, and thought of how, in the first part of this separation, she had missed his money. And then she reflected with a queer outrush of emotion that a good many things were being missed nowadays. It seemed quite true that except for the item of a family, life was now passing her by. She was like a boulder in a stream, a small grey boulder lapped at by currents that whirled and eddied along but left her immovable, currents formed at faraway shores and brought against her only by this or that one of her children. Such transient, vicarious influences did not affect her own immovability; they approached, hovered briefly, were out in the stream again and far as ever.

So that, over these several separate channels of her childrens' existences, and over their incomprehension, it was conceivable that more of her husband than his wages might have been missed. Not passionately nor in a too physical sense; in this twilight of old desires the purple would inevitably have been reduced to mauve. The want, if it were want, was felt in ways far harder to name and with less finished accuracy to be comprehended. Bella could be sure only that it was difficult, after living with a person twenty years and in those years sharing the life she had shared, to forget completely. The sufferings of their intertwined life, her suffering, had been too real and was too indestructible in thought for that.

And yet she could see that her family, her sons, in rising up and forbidding their sire the house after that final scene of wild inebriety, had acted rightly. Moreover, even in that action she had aided no little.

But through it all she still pitied her husband, as she had pitied and understood him in evenings gone by when the man had watched his sons, one poring over text books, one busy with sketching and one struggling with scales and the first intricacies of transposition—when he had watched and unceasingly derided them all.

"Why I'm a better man than any of you'll ever dare to be!" had always been his favorite sarcasm. "Production, that's the story! I labor with my hands, and I produce . . . I'd like to see even one of you learn to handle a stone the way I can. Eleven dollars a day, that's me—Lon

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Trevor, the best man that ever used a six-cut! Say, will any of you ever earn that, eh?"

Boasting. Braggadoccio. And the contrast of mature experience with young ignorance. On the face of it that was all; only Lon's wife saw the rest. The little, envious yearning. The pathetic attempt at justification of the work of the hands against what in time would be more skillful perfection and higher training. The even more pathetic realization of some fierce and secret self-contempt, some hatred in more lucid moments of the weakness of appetite, the falsity that betrayed one's dignity again and again into the scornful keeping of those who otherwise had rendered affection and respect. The father had been jealous of his sons because he realized what still sat pure and serene in the promise of their young lives: untarnished superiority.

The woman knew it had been different with him. His stepfather had not been the kindest of men. At fourteen the boy Lon had been kicked out, at a time when his mother had already borne her new mate two children and was unable to prevent the drastic occurrence. So it was Lon had become a street gamin, fed by his mother during the day but finding a bed where he could, or if not a bed the corner of a stable, or a shed in the stone yard where friends were made of the men. So too he had drifted into what proved to be his life job: granite cutting. Four years apprenticeship in the yard in Pratt Street, Baltimore, amongst a rough and ready set years his senior. A mature and hard drinking lot. Everyone drank in the stone game. Respirators, this and that ingenious contrivance against the sifting stone dust, hardly ever proved efficacious. So it was beer to cool the throat and whiskey to warm the stomach and if you didn't down your drink like a man you were a ninny, not an associate.

This then had been Lon's boyhood, his young manhood, and his wife knew it. His sons knew it too, because sometimes, in his cups, through self-pity stirring at the dregs of the past, he had been wont to mention it. They knew all about Pratt Street and the stepfather, and running wild by day and curling up any place at night. And yet they knew nothing about it, really. Nothing of the temptation, the roughness of the world on untried and untempered adolescence, the vanity and the strength of youth and the careless cocksure confidence of thoughts that told one there was no price the power of youth could not make up, no temptation that could not be resisted if once came conviction that it really was temptation and as such had to be withstood.

No, Lon's sons, in their own as yet unchallenged spirits, knew nothing of this. But Bella knew, and this the reason she pitied her husband with a force more potent, more tenable than contempt. It was given to her to

know of matters the issue of neither pity nor contempt, though her children could not conceive of her thoughts nor partake of the more refined essence of her memories simply because there was so much that was one-sided in their own.

As for her, she could remember happiness and unhappiness both. It was harder to recall specific instances of the first; still there was a sense of some ineffable emotion the result of association in full—and this, mixed as it was with another unnamable sense of failure which always assailed her at last in thinking of her husband and of what he had become, was responsible for fostering within her, as she sat there watching him eat, all that previous fount of pity and a little more besides. She wanted so much, and as ever before, to *do* something.

The meal at an end, the man breathed a sigh of repletion. And he said: "That certainly went to the spot, Belle—thanks." Then he lighted a cigarette and finally looked up with the quizzical grin she knew so well.

"So I surprised you by showing up here today. Why . . . because of the way I—left?" She nodded intently and in a little while his own face wore a glum look. His eyes roved about fitfully.

"I see the place is wired now. Say, those fixtures look fine."

"Yes. Since Jamey's last raise he's negotiating to have hardwood floors put in. He intends to fix the house up in grand style."

"It shows it. Remember when the old folks gave us the place? I bet they'd never know the house now. Say, Belle, I wish—"

But here the man broke off suddenly. Chin on chest, eyes lowered to the floor, he seemed to forget his surroundings. To the woman's eyes however there was no mistaking the expressive moroseness, the weariness.

"You wish what?" she asked presently.

"Oh . . . nothing. I—I guess they don't need the old man any more. I'll hand them credit for saving though, for doing better here than I did. But then, what's the diff? I've had my fun."

Fun—out of a bottle. That was painful.

"You could have saved, Lon." The woman, too, brooded. "Suppose you'd tried putting away a few dollars, the few you drank up each week. It would be you instead of your sons then who was doing all this."

"Well, who cares, I asked you? Who wants a house anyway, to be tied down and never able to move. Me, I like to be free to come and go as I like." He stood up, mashed the cigarette in the plate. "Guess I'd better be going, I—I have to be seeing about that job . . . or something, I don't know. But say, Belle, you've been pretty nice to me today; I won't forget it."

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The woman stood up also. "Wait a minute," she said. "Don't you want your clothes now that you're here? They're packed."

"Why yes, I never thought of that. Will you get them?"

"If you'll just wait . . . it won't take a minute."

But when she returned with the small suitcase the man was seated again, and out of his eyes welled slow tears, while his face was cast in so miserable a mould that suddenly Bella wanted to cry too.

"I've been such a *damned* fool all my life!" was all he said.

"Oh Lon, Lon!" She leaned against the table and eyed him painfully. "Aren't you ever going to do better? Must you drink away the rest of your life?"

He pulled out one of his familiar blue handkerchiefs then and wiped his face. But the tears continued to trickle forth, making his eyes look more bleared then ever.

"I guess I'm a hopeless case," he muttered. "But even I've been thinking lately, Belle. It's a long time since I really tried to lay off the rum. With the boys growing up, supporting you, it didn't seem so important. Yet there's times, at night, when you see things sort of, and that's when the bugs crawl through your brain, understand? They do in mine every night now. Belle, you know—there were only two things I ever loved in this life. You—and the whiskey. Oh, I can't deny the last; as a matter of fact it's all I've got now, now that I haven't got you. But you'll never know how I've wished, just for your sake, that in the beginning I'd never touched it."

She asked the question that had been waiting in her brain from the moment he walked into the house. "Are you *sure* it's too late, then, to try?"

"What's the use? Away from you I couldn't even begin. Listen, can't you see how I've been hitting the rum since Jamey put me out last winter? I'll tell you the truth, Belle, I don't care how soon I get to hell now. The sooner the quicker, that's all."

And then Bella really was crying. Forgotten was the suitcase in her hand, the past unhappiness and disappointment and defeat, the house, children, neighbors. She saw only that staring face, agony unspeakable in the eyes.

"Lon dear." She almost whispered it. "Why don't you try, for me? You say you love—two things. Can't my love prove the stronger? Lon, suppose I consented to take you back here again; couldn't you promise—then?"

For an instant he looked transformed. Then his shoulders slumped

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again. "Your sons would never allow it, Belle. They'd never let me back."

"You don't know my sons!" The woman spoke proudly. "Besides they're your sons too, you know. Lon, you seem to think your boys are out to down you. That's wrong, because they'd be as happy as I would if you stopped drinking, if you made something of yourself. Oh my God, how happy that would make me—me!"

She was in a fever as she finished, a fine exalted frenzy that swept her so hotly she had to cross to the open window. But the man watched her somewhat curiously. And his words, when he spoke, were unexpected and strange.

"Say, you always hated the whiskey worse than the seven deadly sins, didn't you, Belle—even in the beginning? Not that I'm proud of myself for drinking . . . but I would like to know why it affects you so fearfully."

The question lessened her transfiguration. A little coldly she replied: "That's a queer thing to say—now. Why did you talk as you did a few minutes ago; were you simply filling in time?"

"No, not that, Belle. Only, I was away so long—I'd almost forgot how completely dead set you are against the stuff."

"And what if I am, how does that bear? You *were* talking emptily!"

"I wasn't, I tell you. But your words, Belle—your very actions show me how impossible it is. They make me—afraid, do you understand?"

She did not understand, and said as much. And listened as he tried to make his thoughts clear.

"I know you've always worried over me," he went on. "You—you've fought John Barleycorn for my soul, Belle, and I know you've always hoped you would win some day, too. But you hate too hard, you hate *me* every time I get a drink under my belt. Even the times I tried to stop, and then didn't."

"You said yourself you haven't tried for a long time."

"Well, all the more reason for saying this now. But as a matter of fact I've even tried lately. I've tried and it's no use and that's what makes me realize I can't—won't—come back here. You've been too good, I'd hate myself for rolling home screwy some time. And I know that's the way it'd be."

"But what makes you so positive?"

"Because . . . God, because I can't help myself, that's why! Can't you understand, Belle? All the time the bugs keep crawling through my damned old brain, and lately when I've tried to quit, well, I'd start thinking—of never having another drink, another chance to stop that crawling, but just lying there night after night and thinking until the day I die . . .

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and I tell you I couldn't help it, I had to give in! Why, I'm afraid with these thoughts, these bugs in my brain, that if I stayed I might even do some injury to you some night. That's how bad it is. Maybe that will make you understand why I've got to go away and stay away. I've given in to appetite too long, and since I can't do without the rum, why, I've got to do without you, Belle, that's all."

She listened, straining against the window sill, and it was as if some horror tried to escape from her body and beat against wood and metal.

"Why did you return? Why did you? Why?" She almost moaned it.

"I told you I didn't know—before, Belle. But now that I see it all so clear again—don't worry, I won't come around again to trouble you. I know what I want now and what I'll get, too. You'd better just let me go to hell right, and forget about me, Belle. Anyway you won't know where I am. And that's another thing—I was meant from the first to be a rolling stone I suppose; it's the very restlessness that started me floating around the saloons, and afterward the speakeasies. Right now I might go a hundred or a thousand miles away—I don't know and care less. But, Belle, you'll never have to worry about when or how I pass on, I'll keep that from you at any rate—by destroying all identification as I go. That's the least I can do, save you the expense of burying me."

Slowly, carefully, with little pretense of heroics, the man went on speaking to the end. He waited for a reply then, but when none came he took up the suitcase and walked to the back door. For an instant he stood there.

"Goodbye, Belle." The woman remained soundless.

But she turned as he walked out, and watched while he went past the gateway and started up the street. He did not look back. The sagging shoulders, the shuffling walk that was a ghost of his former stride, were those of an old man. Yet he was not old, not yet fifty. Not fifty, and walking away from that same corner to which over twenty years before he had so often brought her in the evenings preceding marriage. How filled with promise he had been then, how charged with gayety, eager, confidently soothing her fears and bidding her be unalarmed always because of his own indomitable nearness . . . this identical figure that now staggered up the pavement with the impress of defeat written into every line and swing of his carriage. She hated him as he walked away, and turned from the window sneering at herself for the stupidity of any wish, however absurd and impossible, to retrace the years over which she had come.



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DIRGE

G. H. Neiman

So whispering I point the oblique question
Away from what's impossible to hear
(Systematic self-respecting sphere!),
Give it what is plainly indirection;

Balance its compulsion to deny
Machines that whirr a glittering perfection
To those who would survive without detection,
To those who glaze the eye.

While mechie laughter rattles windows
Walls sink curtains carpet bed,
Undermines the cushion, blacks the red
Geranium (faint the wind goes);

Jocund, tells the people they are fed—
And underground the crumbling rings
That were so recently beginnings—
And all the martyrs of the globe are dead.



THE PARTY

Eugene Joffe

I would have kept out of it, of course, but I just couldn't help myself. As it was, I not only stayed through the whole thing but I was there before it started and I remained long after it was finished.

When I came to Anne's house I was late and her mother had made everybody wait for me. That was one thing. Then, when I *was* there, I discovered that I knew hardly anyone. I was introduced to the whole bunch, of course, but the only name that stuck in my head was *Lou*. I

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liked Lou as soon as I saw her, and afterawhile I realized that if nothing came of it my night would be pretty effectively spoiled.

We had some kind of a frothy supper then and Anne's mother served us. She tried to make a pleasant stream of conversation flow across and around the table and she failed. As I said, few of us knew each other. Then, there were about four more girls than fellows. Then, the wine. If there had been less wine, it would have been just a pleasant part of the meal; if there had been more, it would have been worthwhile saving till after Anne's mother was gone, when all of us could have become decently soused; but there was just an in-between quantity of wine, and I looked at it and thought to myself, Your fixed for the evening, because here's where you go straight into a half-drunk.

And then she was right in front of me, smiling.

"Do you get sore easily?" she asked.

"Sore?" I said. "No. Why?"

"You will when I tell you this," she said. "You look a lot like someone I know."

"That doesn't get me sore."

"Yes, but this someone is a girl."

We laughed.

"Oh," I said.

"Are you sore?" she asked, smiling.

In about ten minutes she was sitting on my lap and my hands were all over her.

"We're going home together," I said, "aren't we, Lou."

"Are we?" She laughed.

On the way to Lou's house we went into a candy store, the only open place on the block, and while we sat at the soda counter a colored kid came in.

"Well?" the proprietor asked him at once, almost angrily.

His rudeness was an apology, of course, to Lou and me. We were white and grown-up, and the proprietor's unfriendly voice admitted that it wasn't pleasant to drink sodas with a sloppy colored kid right next to us.

"Lemme have a birthday card," the kid said.

"For who—a relation or friend?" the proprietor asked impatiently, going to another part of the store. I could see that it irritated him to have to sell a cheap card at twelve o'clock at night.

"Relation," the kid said. "A sister."

"For how much?—fifteen, a quarter—"

"Fifteen," the kid said.

He was a scraggly-looking blackboy. Perhaps Lou didn't even notice him, but I saw the patch in his soiled pants and the rip in his smudged shirt. He looked forlorn, standing there in what must have been working clothes, jingling the greasy money in his sticky hands. . . .

The proprietor was back with a card and the envelope that came with it.

"Here," he said quickly. "Want a stamp, too?"

The kid took the clean card in his dirty fingers and looked at it.

"No," he said. "That's all."

He put the fifteen cents—two nickels and five pennies—on the counter and went out. The proprietor returned to his newspaper and Lou and I kept on with our sodas; but I couldn't help thinking:

Two nickels and five pennies—he'd been saving a long time to get that card for his sister. His family was poor and he had to work after school, and all he earned he gave to his mother. He could easily have cheated her out of fifteen cents but he hadn't wanted to. He saw how hard it was for his family to get along and he knew how much every little bit meant, so he'd had to save up slowly. Maybe he'd asked his mother for a cent or so, every now and then. Maybe he'd even asked his father to spare him a few cents, once. He knew he earned little enough, but just this once—

Being so poor, the whole family had a hard time of it, and the worse things got the closer they all felt toward each other. And now his sister was having a birthday—she was his older sister—and they were giving her a party tomorrow. She was just sixteen, and this was the first party she was having. He'd wanted to give her something, of course, but as he couldn't get her a decent present he'd bought the card. As far as that went, she probably wasn't getting anything at all from anyone who was coming to the party. But she could get this card, at least. He could put it on her dresser before she awoke in the morning. Or he could leave it near her place at the table tomorrow.

He never thought she'd nearly cry when she saw it.

None of the people who came to the party brought her anything, and though they were all very happy at her birthday and congratulated her, she felt the sadness beneath everything they said. Although her mother kept smiling all the time, she looked as if she were finding it hard not to cry, thinking of her daughter finishing high school, growing up—. Her father sat smiling too, but silent and tired, and every now and then he looked as if he forgot that he was at his daughter's birthday party, and

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he seemed to see something of his own—his job, his pay, his family, all the years of trying—then he would feel his daughter watching him, pitying him with her eyes, and he would try to show her a happy smile.

But none of them could deceive her. She saw the tears her mother still held back, she knew the thoughts her father hid, she felt the hurting knowledge behind the good wishes of her relatives, and when they sat at the scarred table in the dimly-lit room, new food on the clean tablecloth before them, she wanted to cry again at the poverty and the good wishes so strong around her. She knew deeply how hard it all was, how wrong she had been to go to school and not to work, and now that she was finishing soon—what was there for her now?

And at night when it was all over and the others were gone and the dining room was once more empty and the discarded painted wrappings of the new foods mocked them all, they lay wide awake in their beds, the mother crying, the father comforting her with what they both knew were lies, the young son dissatisfied for a reason he couldn't find, and the daughter, full of her unhappiness and her knowledge and her girlhood, lifted into an awakesness which was a living in itself. . . .

"Well," Lou said—

"Oh—" I said, "I—."

"Oh no," turning her back to me. And then as I was silent and didn't touch her again, "What's happened to you anyway?" she said.

But the next minute she was watching me from the front of her house and I was walking home alone, the streets were hushed and dark, and everything was quiet.



POEM

Merle Hoyleman

Inform them of straying, unoled nurture of fertile hoists;
And allow these carping monsters of exasperation to rivet up
The rising carcasses charged with the foison of sea.
Adopt the lungs' intemperate curse, a strangled net of veins,
And accumulate the breasts of a stammering division
While the ruffled confederacy of whiteness returns to mark with dew
the whoredoms

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Where withheld the beat of senses controls the sweet bulb, expulsion,
The high arched foot of power raps against the wheelless edition of kings.
Weapon of reason be this the mistress of the worm apparition, and tape
detained

In the likeness of my arteries indifferent to the whining whirl of a
mongrel's motion.

What negative spectators devise honor among the people who lose triumph,
And sapphire visions of morning are warm with melting tallow
Pronounced across the riders of commandments found bitter in the cast of
wilderness.

Tell us not the immemorial apple is unplucked in the sea's dryland,
And supping up of liquor to the groins is a horseman's pledge,
Or honey vitrol blemishes the lips of breedless breath of northwood giants,
To cover the operation of the sky, or orgin of a harnessed, unhoused night.



ABOUT LOVE

Karlton Kelm

They were in the swing on the back porch. The river was just beyond, gleaming in the moonlight. The moon was big and pumpkin color. The lower half of it was buried in the river. That made the water very warm, very ripply.

Locusts gave their cool evening sound. And cats made deep moaning love in the shadows of the garden plants.

The smell of a distant bonfire. The adventurous night-air of autumn.

His arms were around her, straining. She wished he wouldn't press so hard. His chest wasn't a bit soft and it hurt her breasts. But she didn't like to say anything. Tho she did think he might be a bit more romantic. And say nice things about the moon. And kiss her hand. O so softly, so tenderly.

No, he just kept straining. And breathing funny. Like it was awfully cold.

Too bad he didn't know more about love. Instead of acting as if it were a fight. As if she were another boy, instead of a big girl in seventh grade.

That was the way boys wrestled together. In the schoolyard. Or in

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bed mornings. Like her brother and cousin Rodney. When Rodney came to visit.

Dickie, look up. How can you see the moon with your head down like that.

Huh?—He jerked up quickly. His hair was mussed. His eyes were kind of funny, and there was perspiration on his upper lip.

O and I thought you were cold.—Marion laughed and wiped away the perspiration with her finger.

He looked at her for a moment. Kind of surprised. Then he grabbed her roughly around the neck and pressed his face into hers. Kissed her. But it didn't seem like a kiss at all. It was too hard. And it didn't smell of nice toothpaste like Papa's. It tasted salty from perspiration on his lip. It smelt of warm sticky Hershey bars with nuts in them.

Don't, Dickie. Can't you sit still a minute and watch the moon and talk nice the way when we were little kids?

Huh?

I wish you were polite and romantic. I wish you would make regular love to me instead of this. Like gentlemen in the movies. Or in our sixth reader. But no, you must always muss me up and fight with me like those old cats down there.

Huh?—Again he looked up. This time he sat up straight.—Say, you don't even know about cats.

Well, I know fighting isn't love.

Aw, who's fighting?

You are. You and those cats.

He looked at her. Kind of sheepish. Then he kind of snickered. Then he pulled at his pants leg and drew away.

Marion drew away too. She got out of the swing and pressed her face against the porch screening. She watched the river. Kind of slinking along. All goldish. All silent.

You better go home, Dickie.

Aw.

Go on.—Her eyes were kind of big and moist. Wondering.

Awright.—He got out of the swing. At the door he stood and shifted from one foot to the other.—Gee, you're funny.

She turned to look at him. Her nose had a smudge of dirt from the screening. He saw it and laughed and laughed. Then he pulled his belt tight and went out the screen door.

Tomorrow he'd probably have another girl.

Marion wiped the smudge from her nose. Then she forgot and pressed her face into the screening again.

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She didn't like Dickie any more. She told the moon so. Dickie was in High School now and thought he knew about love and things. She supposed that Dickie would say that in the movies, or in her sixth reader, *that* was fighting too. Well, it wasn't!

Marion's lips were kind of quivering. Something was happening to the movies for her. She didn't know what.—As tho a movie hero's kiss would taste salty. Or smell like musty chocolate with nuts in it.

No. It would either taste of nice toothpaste like Papa's or it wouldn't taste at all. She thought probably that it wouldn't taste at all. At least not like anything she had ever tasted.

Marion went back and sat in the swing. The moon was almost out of the water now. Marion swang softly back and forth. The swing made a moaning noise. Like the cats in the garden.

Marion jumped out of the swing. She sat in a chair. A tear slipped down her cheek slowly, steadily. Autumn nights weren't so much fun as when she was a little girl. Then she used to play out in the backyard until it was quite late. Papa said for the children to get all the fresh air they could take before school got under way and the cold weather came.

The leaves falling. She always saved the prettiest ones. The red ones. With a bit of orangish yellow near the stems. She pressed them in her school books. When she was a little girl.

And the bonfires. They used to smell of adventure. Now they smelt of smoke. Nicer than other smoke of course, but still smoke. Or a memory of adventure. Marion didn't know quite what.

They used to play House in the dry leaves. Little levees of leaves marking off kitchen, diningroom, parlor. They always left out the bedroom. Maybe because they never knew how to make an upstairs.

Then after they were tired playing they put all the leaves together. Then the big bonfire. The kids in the neighborhood coming from all directions. Running. Excitement in their eyes. The deep orange flames against the night air. The smouldering grass ovens for sizzling potatoes. Sputtering apples, spitting out their juice.

And Mama couldn't get her to eat a baked apple any other time. But she liked the bonfire ones. Even when they burnt black in places and tasted like smoke. Like adventure too.

O the orange flames dancing, leaping. The boys trying to jump over them just to show off. The mothers calling from the dark porches. Warning. Threatening.

Then after the fire was down, after it just kind of glowed and throbbed real low, after the kids had all gone home, Marion in the swing with Papa. The creaking of the swing, soft, soothing. Not like cats!

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Papa's deep voice and his cigar glowing like a lightning bug when he puffed on it. Papa talking to Mama. Marion not hearing what he said because his voice was like music and said everything at once. Just hearing the sound of his voice.

O the protection of those arms and the moon on the river. Like now only different. She would get so sleepy and the locusts would sing drowsy-like. And Mama would listen, so still, with her long white hands in her lap. Mama, who never smiled much. Whose hands were so white, so gentle.

Then, the backyard wasn't the same at all. No one had ever played in it. It was so tall and solemn and ghostly. Just like an old picture, or an empty room, something—Except when a cat tore thru it, giving it the old proportion.

She would get sleepier and sleepier and snuggle close. And let her eyes shut, slowly, slowly. And Papa would sit so quiet, never jerking, never straining. Like a lover in a movie. Not like Dickie. Papa's side so soft, so soft. . . .

Then a gentle sinking, sinking. And Papa's warmth and the locusts in the pungent trees. The locusts singing Tl-rrr-r—Tl-rrr-r—Something like that. Like now only different. Like a lullaby. Like a love. L-Love.

Then all at once Papa carrying her in to bed.

Mama undressing her with her cool white hands. Then last of all, Papa kissing her. So gently. His nice mouth tasting like toothpaste.

Marion jumped up from the chair and ran into the house.

Papa. Papa. Come out on the porch and see the moon.

Papa stood at the foot of the stairs. He had his hat on.

Papa, let's make a bonfire.

Why, Marion. Why, Marion.—Papa looked at her strangely.

Papa, come out in the swing with me. Talk the way you used to when Mama was living. Talk real close to me till I get so sleepy—

Why, Marion. You're a big girl now.

Marion's soft lips pouted.—O Papa, don't you love me any more?

Why, Marion. Of course. But Papa's busy now. Papa's going out. 'Nother business appointment.

Marion turned away. Papa had so many business appointments at night.

Marion ran to him and grabbed both of his hands.—Papa, what is love?

Papa looked impatient. Papa looked distressed.

It isn't fighting, Papa. Not like cats and things—?

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Papa gasped a little.—Why, Marion. Love is beautiful and clean and spiritual. It makes us strong and good.

Marion jumped up and down.—O thank you, Papa. I'm glad! I'm glad!

An automobile horn sounded cautiously in the driveway. Papa looked up sharply.

Now Marion, you skip out on the back porch like a good girl. Papa wants you to get all the fresh air you can take before school gets under way and the cold weather comes.

Yes, Papa.

Papa switched off the lights and stood in the front doorway, his profile against the moonlight.—Go on, Marion.

Marion smiled. She felt better now. Papa was coaxing, just like she was a little girl again.—Papa, if I sit in the swing till you get back, will you carry me up to bed? Just this once?

Papa made a face.—Yes, yes, anything you say. Only run along and don't bother Papa now.

Papa slammed the front door after him. Marion frowned. She started for the back porch. Papa had made a face at her. She stood still. She heard a car door close cautiously. It didn't slam like other times. Like other business appointments.

Marion slipped back into the front room. She tiptoed up to the window that overlooked the driveway. The window was open. Because Papa said to get as much fresh air in the house as possible before the cold weather came. Softly she parted the curtain. Just a bit.

She saw Papa. In his nice black suit. Then she saw a lady beside him. A lady in white. She was at the wheel. But she hadn't started the motor yet. She was looking into Papa's eyes and murmuring something soft and quivery. Then suddenly she turned and looked up at the window.

Marion just ducked in time.

Marion was afraid to look again. But she listened. Crouched beneath the window sill.

She heard the lady making soft little noises with her lips. She heard Papa breathing, breathing, hard, sort of gaspy-like, the way Dickie did when—

Marion's head shot up and she looked out the window again. All she could make out was one figure now. A black and white one. She blinked hard. Then she saw Papa's arms, all around the lady, straining, straining. Fighting. Like boys in bed mornings.

And she saw his eyes, just for a second, for a flash. His eyes, not

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strong and good, but weak and silly. Kind of glassy. Like a cat's. Kind of funny, like Dickie's when—

Marion tore away from the window. But she didn't go out on the back porch to watch the moon now. She didn't care about the moon. It would be high and small and light yellow now. It would be completely out of the water. The water would be cold.

She didn't care about the smell of bonfires either.

She ran upstairs to her room. She locked the door. She threw herself on her bed. But she didn't cry. She just wondered, her hands under her chin, her eyes climbing vaguely up and down the brass rods of her bed.

Until she heard the cats moaning in the garden again. Then she covered her ears with her hands. Pressed her face into her pillow.

But after a time she sat up. She crept to the window and looked down into the driveway. Her eyes were big. But the car was gone. Papa had kept another appointment.

Marion made a face and undressed for bed. Her mouth was a hard little line. And when the cats began moaning in the garden again she didn't cover her ears.

She even went to her door and unlocked it.

But when Papa got home he wouldn't find her in the swing. Waiting to be carried up to bed. Silly. She was a big girl now.

And if he remembered to come in and kiss her goodnight she would pretend she was asleep. She would be lying on her face. He could only get at the back of her neck. Because his breath wouldn't be like toothpaste. It would be like Hershey bars. With nuts in them.

Even worse than Dickie's. Because Papa was too old for Hershey bars. With or without nuts.

Marion thought of Dickie. She hoped he wouldn't get a new girl. She would dream about Dickie. Tonight. She would not dream about movie heroes and Papas and more. Always about Dickies now. Dickies with mussed hair and warm chocolate.

And more Dickies.

Marion gaped and stretched her slender limbs. She wondered how about love and cats and fighting and Hershey bars where Mama was. Quiet Mama with her long white hands.

Marion closed her eyes. She relaxed.

Marion was getting used to a new idea. About love.

She didn't hear the locusts in the trees. The locusts went Tl-rrr-r— Tl-rrr-r. The cool night spread.

Marion was asleep.



THREE POEMS

Etta Blum

EARLY DAWN

Hoofs of horses
spin tock-tock on the pavement.
Dreams of the living
rustle gravely over the streets.
From fields trees
flutter discreetly.
Dawn circles
with a tock-tock
thru my heart trickling
rosy calmness.
Awareness of you sleeping
prances thru end—
lessness of steady streets.

The punctual bird
that sings bouquets of recollection
has not yet awakened.

WHERE THE HORSES

Where the horses had passed
were loud hoof-signs.

What silence leaned to us
from the quick branches.

There was no refuge from
sun. The godhead
of our love strayed soberly
from each to each.

In the heavy sand we
followed the moist tracks,
remembered clapping of

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horses heard a distant
time. Of all our encounters
recalled triumphantly
that furious path.

DOCUMENT

Ocean-darkness and carousel, we walked
our faces glowing beneath electric lights and beyond.
(Distinct thru me the hours I spent, recalcitrant
to undiscovery, spinning my thoughts widely
bending to myself as nearly as acknowledgement
could allow, knowing that I was searching
for that which imperceptibly had been mine before.)
Our purpose together is recognition, is it not?
recognition in the sense that I recognize my lover indomitably.
(Alone I watched the leaves wind-flatten against the bark,
knew that the memory of escape had become a perfume
about my days, wondered that to be
were simpler than not to be, but that
the mind was greedy of the scrubby root.
I had this to settle with myself:
not forced, you understand, but shyly
to be followed and at the moment grasped and sealed.)
Walking after rain at night is smelling the freshness
of dawn, which becomes in this instance legitimate.
Was that the ocean mumbling beneath the boardwalk?
I thought that we would go and return
and our bodies unaware of movement.



BETWEEN US

Paul Brown

We struck at the grain of the rock with our blunt picks and the sun
pressed down on us and we poured sweat and tiny splinters of the rock
stuck to our bare arms. We had to follow the grain of the rock to make
any headway and it took us quite a way out of the area we were sup-
posed to level.

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It would have been simple to blast but Mr. Wallace, whose wife was pregnant, said the noise would make her nervous. The head gardener once told us that Mr. Wallace's father, the senator, gave each of his grandchildren a million dollars the day they were born.

"You got to be careful when you carry a million bucks inside you," Tony said.

I liked Tony. He was an Italian who had served on the Austrian front and had been taken prisoner. While we worked he told me many stories of the war. Once I questioned him about self-inflicted wounds and he told me a soldier would cake his arm with soap before shooting through it. After, he would wash his arm and the wound would be clean with no tell-tale powder burns.

He told me this with shame and cursed the soldiers who had done it. He, himself, had smashed one of his fingers with a hammer but that had been in the Austrian prison camp and he had done it so that he would not be able to run a machine in a factory. Tony was very patriotic but his patriotism was based on comradeship and not on abstract rot. I used to ride him about what the French would some day do to the wops. He knew I was kidding and told me that anyway the wops could beat the chinks or niggers or whatever the hell I was.

The head gardener always put us together to work. He would give us a job and Tony and I would work like hell and finish it quickly and then sit down in the shade and trade stories. We were both lazy and preferred a pipe and the shade of a tree rather than the hot sun and the boss's nice work boys.

There was no getting through with this rock though. There was too much of it and the worst of it was, we were exposed to the big house. We couldn't chisel around and kill time.

When it was leveled, Mr. Wallace intended building a tennis court there for his children. He told the head gardener it would keep them out of mischief when they began prowling around to dances. The tennis court was supposed to take the place of a bed-mate. I tried to get the head gardener to let us fill in instead of digging out but he said Mr. Wallace knew all that rock was there and it would make poor drainage.

Usually in the morning it was not so bad because some large oaks shaded the area but in the afternoon we caught the full sun and our backs and arms began to ache and our hands became cramped and stung from the loose pick handles.

Even in the morning that day the heat was oppressive and we breathed with difficulty. Tony and I joked back and forth banally. We had been working together since spring and it was now July. Our stories had given

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out and we had cursed what we hated and praised what we loved. There was nothing left to do but curse and praise some more and kid each other. We had to keep going with some kind of talk. It was necessary to escape time and we couldn't repeat, knowingly, the stories because we would then become conscious that our talk had a purpose.

During the half-hour for lunch we did not speak. After we had eaten, I read a paper and Tony smoked his pipe and stared across the lawns and fields at the farm buildings. I dreaded going back to the rock and I knew Tony did. We both wanted the half-hour to be prolonged indefinitely. Lunch time is the fastest time there is though. I looked at the Ingersoll we had hung up on a twig and it was half-past.

"Come on," I said, getting up. "You know, we ought to get a cut on that million dollars.

"You're getting a cut," Tony said. "You're getting a hundred a month."

We went back to the rock. The picks no longer had any points and I could feel the sting with each stroke clear up to the shoulder. Just before I struck I would anticipate the sharp pain and pull the stroke a little. I hit a hard spot and let the pick drop.

"Jesus!" I said. "I wish they would put in an order for new picks or get these sharpened."

My hands were hot and tingling. Tony grunted.

"You wish in one hand and sit on the other," he said, "and see which is filled first."

There was something about the way he said it that was not like him. I watched him but he was bent over his pick and I could not see his face. I saw his dirty overalls and his thick sweaty dirt-streaked arms and his pipe sticking out at an angle from the brim of an old felt hat. He was there all right. But he was not there like he had always been: There was a note of reproach in his voice. He was putting the blame for something on me. I felt this, at that time, as you feel things on a hot summer afternoon—without full apprehension.

I talked along not knowing what I was saying but just letting the words come out to keep my consciousness from centering absolutely on the heat and ache. While I was talking Tony began to sing softly. I did not recognize the tune but it must have been concerned in some way with festivals. It sounded like you would feel at a festival.

I stopped talking, and hearing him sing, the vague feeling of enmity left me. Tony was there like he had always been, singing time into the background. I knew what he was doing. He was singing that festival song and remembering way back before the war when he was a youth

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or a child and there was not the complication and ruin. That was before the sun had become an enemy, when the sun was a thing to ripen the grapes and hasten the harvest and not a blinding rebound from hard immovable rock.

I, also, have sung when the world has seemed to halt at one aching moment. I learned the trick working beside negroes on the roads. It is a way out. It is a way to start life moving again.

After a while Tony changed his song for one that was melancholy. We worked along and the sun became hotter and you could feel it going right through you. Tony with his song worked slowly and steadily not really knowing the rock was there before him. I worked spasmodically, going at it hard and fast, then slowing up, then going at it hard and fast again. Tony's method was better. He had a larger pile of loose broken rock beside him.

Whenever Tony did more work than I, I kidded him about not keeping up with me. Now, while he sang, I said "Come on, come on, boy. Speed up a little. You can't lull that rock out with a song."

As I was saying it I felt it was all wrong. I felt that then, at that time, with his singing a native song to escape the sun and the rock, it would not fit in like it did at other times. He should have said something back and continued his song. That's the way it had always been before. But he didn't. He straightened up and looked at me.

"The hell with you," he said. He started to work again but he did not sing.

Then I felt it coming between us. I saw the end of the pleasant hours we had spent at easier work and the disruption of the bond which our common aches had strengthened. I saw it all very clearly. I knew that at last the sun and rock had gotten to us. Still, I thought, I might say something to avert it. Really, I knew that I couldn't. I jumped on the head gardener to help us.

"It's the head gardener's fault, this ache in our arms," I said. "He hasn't got the nerve to ask Mr. Wallace to lay out the money for new picks."

Tony straightened up again. Looking at me his eyes did not seem quite sure of what they were seeing. They were all red and must have smarted like mine from the sweat running into them.

"The head gardener is a son of a bitch," he said slowly like a child trying to recite a piece it had partially forgotten. "And so are you."

His jaws stuck out hard and tight and made him look as if he was trying not to cry. It was the eyes that did it. If we had been bent over the remark could have passed. Usually we said one thing with our mouth

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but our eyes said something else and made it a joke. But now the eyes and the mouth said the same thing. I had to recognize it.

"What the hell is eating you?" I said.

"Nothing," Tony said. "It's just as I say."

He swung his pick at the rock not noticing me anymore. Still I could not fight with him. I could not hurl my pick or a rock at his head. I was not that far gone yet. The thing to do was to come back at him, but not too violently, so I called him a goddamn wop contemptuously. I had called him that before but always jokingly. Now I meant it.

Tony took it without even straightening up from his work. I watched him awhile but he kept on working. I started at the rock again.

In a little while I heard him cry, "God damn you." I looked up quickly and ducked instinctively. He missed me with a rock, then he threw his pick at me. He was too excited to throw it end over end and just pushed it away from himself with his short fat arms. The handle of the pick struck me on the shoulder and I jumped for him.

I tried to get at his throat but he got in too close and wrapped his arms around me. Then he began to press slowly and I could hardly breathe. He had his chin over my shoulder and I lifted it with a few jolts but he hung on just pressing harder and harder. I could feel the sweat coming out all over me as if he was squeezing me dry. I thought I was going out and the fear made me twist and jerk. I brought up my knee to his groin and suddenly he was lying on his back in front of me.

I fell on him swinging at his face. He kept jerking his head and I lost all the skin off my knuckles hitting the rock. We rolled over and over punching and kicking and then someone pulled me off of him and Mr. Wallace and the head gardener were holding me. Tony got to his feet and came after me again but some of the laborers held him.

We were both fired. Mr. Wallace told us to go home and not come back. He said something more about ignorant animals. I wanted to tell him what he could do with his tennis court but I was too exhausted.

After we had washed, Tony and I walked down the driveway to the state road. We did not walk together as we had always done. He walked on one side of the driveway and I walked on the other. Once I looked over at him and he was watching me but he turned his head quickly.

We waited for the bus into town and when it came we were embarrassed about who was to get in first. I stalled the longest and Tony went in and sat way in the back. I wanted to sit beside him and talk it over but I didn't know how he felt about it.

In the bus I caught a little breeze and cooled off. I didn't mind losing the job. It wasn't much and for some time I had been thinking

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of quitting. I was sorry about Tony though. In some way I knew we had been tricked into a fight neither of us had wanted. I didn't know what to do to make it all right again.

At the top of the second hill I looked down and saw the river with a few rowboats on it. Between the trees were cottages with the road cutting white and hard in front of them. We came down the hill and along in front of the cottages. On the shaded porches people stretched in hammocks reading or listening to the radio. There were three or four couples, all dressed in cool white, dancing on one of the porches. Watching them as the bus slowed down, I felt suddenly sick and lonely and wanted to get home and lie in my room with the curtain down and maybe sleep.

It was quiet in town with everybody off to the mountains or the river. There was hardly any traffic and the store clerks sat outside under the awnings. The bus slowed down for Tony's stop and I felt someone tap me on the shoulder. I looked up at Tony. He had a grin all over his face. I smiled at him.

"Good-bye," he said.

"Good-bye," I answered. "I hope you get a job."

"I'll get one," he said.

On the sidewalk he grinned again and waved assuring me it was all right. Good-bye, good-bye, I nodded to him.



UNEMPLOYED: 2 A. M.

Sol Furnaroff

The park lamp in reverie.

The nervous leaves rustle voices of sadgreen light.

Here on a bench an old woman is sleeping.

Her head droops limp against her breast

rising and falling like the bow of the fountain

all night long whisperweeping:

sleep sleep.

And the men with bared feet in the grass:—

their tired, heavy bodies hug the earth;

they mutter strange words in far away voices.

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The cool soft grass is soothing:
hush ah hush.

The waterfront nearby smells like a black restless wind.
A horn uneasy calling moans far off—
outcries of unrest in a dream.



THE OLD LADY GETS BURIED

William Watrous Deats

Ward was the only one home with her when she died. She'd had poor spells all that summer but no one paid any attention to them.

It was a hot night and they sat out on the porch.

"I feel sick," she told Ward. "Maybe it's that pint of ice cream I ate."

Ward went down the road to the garage and told Lillian to go for the doctor. When he came back Hat was lying on the sofa fanning herself with a sheet of folded newspaper. Her huge chest was heaving.

The doctor came slowly and ponderously up the stone steps and examined her.

"I think I'm dying, Doc," she said.

"Nonsense. You've got an attack of asthma. Take this and somebody better come back to the office with me for some other medicine."

After the doctor had gone, Ward couldn't keep her still. First she'd sit up and then she'd lie down. She'd go in the house and then she'd come back out on the porch.

"For Christ's sake, Ma," he said, "keep quiet. The doctor said you was to keep quiet."

Finally he had to help her into the house. She sat on the couch in the dining room for a while, then lay back upon it. It grew harder and harder for her to get her breath. When she started to grab at his hands, Ward knew she was dying. She only grabbed at them a couple of times.

Ward ran out of the house and down the road. Lillian was just turning the corner in her car.

"It's no use," he told her. "She's dead."

He went on down the road to Chet Meyer's house and banged on the door. Chet stuck his head out of an upstairs window.

"Who's there?"

"It's me—Bull. You better come up to the house. The old lady just died."

Chet put on a pair of pants and a shirt and went back up the road with Ward.

"How did it happen?"

"She took sick about ten o'clock. Doc got there and gave her some medicine. He was going to send some more over with Lillian but she died before it came.

"None of the rest is home. Helen's up to the lake. Manning's out somewhere. Jake started to bum his way to Buffalo this morning. God knows where he is."

When Chet saw the body he sent Ward back to the garage to call the undertaker. Hat was lying half off the couch; one arm hung over the edge, touching the floor. Chet laid her straight on the couch and folded her arms across her chest. He tied her jaw shut with a towel he found in the kitchen. Then he went out on the porch to smoke.

Ward came back from the garage.

"I phoned Kramer. He's coming right up. I phoned Helen, too. I'll send George a message in the morning."

Helen came in half an hour. When she went in the house she had a spell of hysterics.

"Oh, Ma, Ma," she kept crying.

"Aw, for Christ's sake," Ward said. "Shut up. That ain't going to do any good now."

Manning came home after mid-night. He smelled of whiskey but he came up the steps without stumbling. When he saw Chet he knew something was wrong.

"It's your mother. She had a bad spell and passed out."

Manning went in the house and looked at her. He came out on the porch and sat down.

"I knew she couldn't last long. Having them poor spells all summer."

He and Ward looked at each other in the lamplight that came through the window. Neither of them said anything. After a while Manning stood up.

"I'm going to make me some coffee. I need it bad."

The undertaker came and they carried the corpse into the parlor. None of them went to bed.

The minister came the next morning. He was in his shirt sleeves and he ran briskly up the steps. Manning and Ward were out on the porch. Manning was sitting down; Ward was standing up with one foot on the

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low rail. There were cigarette stubs and burnt paper matches all around them on the floor.

"Hello, boys. I just heard about your mother so I came right up. It's true, isn't it?"

"Yeah, it's true," Ward said. He spat over the rail onto a rosebush. "She's inside."

"Try and be brave, boys." He patted Ward's shoulder and went inside.

Helen was in the house crying on Cousin Kate's shoulder.

"We want you to preach the funeral, Mr. Welch." She called out to Ward, "When do you want it to be?"

"Day after tomorrow, I guess."

"Here?"

"Yeah. The old lady wouldn't want any church funeral. About two o'clock."

The minister patted Ward's shoulder again and went away. Lillian came up from the garage with a pan of baked beans.

"You all ought to eat something," she said.

George and his wife drove in that night from New York; they had the younger sister, Madeline, with them. Madeline and Helen cried when they saw each other. They wanted to know how it happened, so Ward told the story over again.

Jake came home the next morning.

"I went broke," he said, "so I came home."

"Ma's dead," they told him.

He looked at them all, said "Christ!" once, and went in the house.

Later in the day George asked, "Did Ma leave anything?"

"There was ten dollars in the pocketbook," Manning said.

"Ten dollars! Why Ma always had more than that on her. The whole town knew it."

"Ten dollars," Manning said again. "Ask Bull."

"Why it's only a little after the first of the month. She'd of had more than that left from the government insurance check. Ma always carried fifty or sixty dollars in cash around with her. People used to talk about it."

"Jesus Christ," Ward said. "You don't think I stole it, do you? After watching her die?"

"I don't know. It sounds kind of funny."

Most of the town came to the funeral. The relatives sat in the parlor with the corpse. The friends were in the dining room and out on the porch. Ed Smith was half drunk. He sat on a folding chair outside

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and during the service he kept trying to put his arm around the Maillet girl. After it was over he went up the road with her.

The girls cried when they carried the body out of the house. They cried again when they lowered it into the grave. After they came back from the cemetery, George's wife fainted from the heat and had to be carried upstairs.

Madeline came down and stood in the doorway.

"Well, I suppose we'll sell the house."

"Sell it, hell," Manning said. "Where do you think Bull and Jake and me are going? On the town?"

"You might as well," George said. "By the time you three are here alone for a few months there won't be anything left of the place."

"You couldn't get anything for it if you did sell it," Jake told Madeline. "There's no lights in it and no water. These Yorkers that come up here for the summer want something fancier than this. It's all right for us."

"It's all right for you," Madeline answered, "but where do the rest of us come in? What do we get out of it?"

"For Christ's sake," Ward said. "Shut up. You make me sick—all of you. There wasn't a goddam one of you thought enough of the old lady to stay home and look after her. Now she's dead you're fighting about how much you're going to get."

"You better wait till she gets cold, anyway." He threw his cigarette out into the road and stamped into the house.



SUNSET

Jay Leyda

There is fine reason
In this curving change
Wrought on moved growth
From plowing season
To reaping stranger
Light and shadow,
Full but dying from
The sun's stroke, sunk below
Our lifted arms, numb,

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Pointing, having been lately
Stretched on the heaped edges
Of confused, once straightly
Up-torn furrows,
Fused with the rigid
Waits, the paces
Of the corn's depth,
Of our embraces,
Darkening with the sky.
Just as the sun has shaped by plan
Each seen form's bright and shade,
We ask to realize all that can
Exist here in the weeds, where we have laid
All rights, ourselves, all wrongs.



WHITSUNTIDE

Hazel Hawthorne

It was Sunday afternoon after dinner, and I remember that the morning had been grey and silent. The day before, the Whitsuntide celebrants had kept passing by with bicycles or on foot, with rucksacks and carrying branches of lilacs and gold-drip, singing in loud abandoned voices. No one passed now, except a few fishermen.

We scattered away from the table in the damp flagged hall, where a soiled bust of Bismarck glimmered darkly in the shadow above the great wardrobe, and the stable smells seeped in from under the door that opened into the barn. Max, the son of the landlord, went into the living-room and played everything he knew on the piano, so vigorously that the metal wings of a brass eagle on the shelf vibrated as if the creature were struggling to fly.

The children went into the barn and watched Emma feeding the newborn calf from a basin of milk. Her beautifully shaped brown arms were bare above the elbow, and her thick dirty fingers cradled the animal's nose firmly until he was forced to drink the milk or choke in it. He backed and shunted, but always her two fingers pressed into his nostrils, and he found himself plunged into milk no matter how he struggled.

Then the children went upstairs to their pension bedroom, which

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seemed so like a dormitory, and began frisking over the beds. From my room, where I sat sipping a glass of malaga and writing in my diary, I saw Emma in the garden, among the gooseberry bushes. She was bending sturdily from her hips, her black cotton stockings and wooden mules firm on the moist soil, and she was putting handfuls of the pale green ribbed fruit into her pockets. Under the blue cloth bound about her hair, her face was red-brown, with high cheek bones, the hard face of a man.

And just then the doorbell clanged, and Christophe came tramping up the stairs. He had a Hamburg flag, red with a white castle, tied on a pole he had stripped of all but its topmost leaves, which dangled like pieces of old green rag. His Sunday hat was crushed over one eye. He stood silently at the door, looking almost hopefully ludicrous, then he set down his portable phonograph case, and I greeted him with disparaging annoyance.

—Oh, don't play any music now! It's been such a lovely quiet day.

—But you don't know this New World Symphony, he said, and with a drunkenly conscientious effort laid a disc in place, and started the needle. The whole affair was warped and faulty, so only disconcerting noises ensued. Christophe went outdoors, and sat on a bench against the house wall, facing the garden. I stopped the music, followed him, and sat there looking at the gravel walks and the great plum tree whose buds were still small and hard, the tips just beginning to show a faint color. The barn-swallows came out from under the eaves with quick cries.

I sat with my face in my hands. Why do you drink all the time? I asked. Is it because you want so much to go back to America?

—Even if I were there, he said, I wouldn't be doing anything, thinking anything. I don't know the secret that other people know. What is it they're sure of that keeps them going?

I looked at his face which was sharp with its eagerness, yet incomplete. If you would only give up the idea of establishing some cosmic relationship, and take things simply, I said, you'd be all right. As it is, you're afraid every time the earth completes a turn on its axis.

—Afraid of what? he grinned.

—Of being fooled.

Then he became rather defiant. Well, it *is* confusing, he retorted. I look up at the stars and I don't know what their force is, what's the need for them, or anything, to be fixed. I don't see any *reasons*.

What could I say? I had my children, and my unspoken love for him and I thought, beside these, probably things like the plums just blossoming and the barn-swallows were sufficient to hang onto. But I understood that not being enough for him.

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—Well, I just can't have you coming around here like a drunken ape, in front of the children, I said, and kissed him. He went lurching down the lane toward the sea, with his silly banner riding above the hedge.

Soon it began to rain, and a real storm broke. The housekeeper, evil and superstitious, came upstairs with a white face, and together we marshalled the children down into the kitchen. She carried the fires out into the yard on a shovel, and soon the little heaps of coals sputtered out under the downpour. She would not have the children in the living-room lest they climb up on the good furniture. We had to stay down there in the dusk, because there was danger of the straw thatch of the roof being caught up in sudden fire by the lightning. The children's faces, pressed to the window panes, shone strangely white against the unnatural darkness everywhere. They were watching the hail fill the garden paths and spurt in pebbles upon the iron table and benches. For a few moments the garden looked like the illustration of a dream.

Then the storm passed, the expected May storm which, this year, had been delayed until Whitsuntide. The children trooped back upstairs and Max began playing *Schleswig-Holstein* triumphantly. I went upstairs, too, thinking that when Christophe's father died he would have enough money to go back to America, and live as rascally as he liked.

The whole day seemed to be going in slow motion, like the Sundays of childhood, or rather, it was as if from moment to moment, the present had come to a standstill in time. Yet as I looked back over it I saw that when the day became memory I would be able to unreel it across my mind, over and over, and each time the scene, the things that had happened, and the words that had been spoken would seem quicker and more lively than before.

And I remember that I looked out into the garden, and saw Emma among the dripping bushes again, and wrote in my diary, Someday I will think *Now far away in Germany the girls like Emma are picking gooseberries in the rain.*



RECOGNITION

Richard Johns

You were a one, with your swift flights throughout the house, upstairs and down, marvelling so phrenetically that it was really mine and you would live there. For a day or so we were happy, carried on by your enthusiasm. It's a wonder we did not guess that it would be quite too

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the same; we were from the city, drugged with city ways, not alive at all to what the country held out for us. Perhaps I worked too hard, but saying that seems always slightly funny. I knew only that you would face me at the table, walk beside my face across the hills. But there were no more words, nothing to say or speak.

Of course I loved you last summer, when you were fresh and thrilled just by a glimpse of the sea in passing, a cloud so close behind a tree it seemed tangled in the branches. How fast you tanned those months by the sea: were young and lovely in delight of the world. The little lines hemmed round your eyes by close buildings and the subway's roar smoothed out so neatly, the shrill catch of your city voice softened into an almost pleasant music, while your eyes, bleared from smoke in many speakeasies, sparkled as swiftly as the birds they darted after.

It was a summer, wasn't it? We danced and loved and dreamed as you unfolded, sailed far out on the sea till all the pretty people we had grown to like in the port were bright and little, like the lice you drew down from the merry canary that woke us, singing. Oh, they were gay, our friends, and strangely adequate all summer long. Even I went on picnics, drank and skinned my knees on rocks, swatted mosquitoes and loved it. And never once we really looked at any other with acquisitive warmth. That, dear, was a triumph for each of us, for I have never been too constant, and you know yourself.

Perhaps we should have stayed there, never come back to town. But money goes so swiftly in a pleasant summer. You looked a little sad at the station as you said goodbye to all the others, set out with me again for the loudness of New York. No doubt, removed from the frame of sea and salt and sailor-pants and sun-bleached hair, I was a little tawdry and dull. God knows I admit I'm both by nature. You did not gain in transition; the only time in those six months of town you really touched me as you had by the shore was when you found that little squirrel in the park. Of course you were delighted, but why you brought it home to keep the pantry cluttered I could not see. Thank God, you tired of it quickly and took it back while I was out.

And then I went to Connecticut to do some work and you were left in the city alone. I guessed the way you lived, light as air in feeling, sleeping out like any bitch, drinking too much and fading quickly. Then there we were in a house of my own in the country, thinking for a time that all was well. You still were tired and drawn from town, didn't seem to care how you looked, probably felt there was no reason. And I suppose you began to hate me; I know now I was getting fat, and dull for anything except my work which was none too good. Why, surrounded

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by trees and birds and cows, did we sit so long in silence, hot and heavy with regret for what we did not understand?

That last night when I came back from Westport, after Natalie had been so nice to me until I drank too much and she had to put me out, I found you with your head buried in your arms, a pile of torn-up summer photos strewn about the room, a drink spilled wide across the rug. I did not understand, saw only that you looked like hell, but, full of liquor, wanted you as I would any hag that moment. And it was that took down your hair, made me the beast I was, drew dull cries into a sodden pillow for more of the night than one is meant to cry. I shudder still at the horror of your face that morning, the scream you gave the mirror before you broke it, quite utterly.

Of course you left. Then I looked in the mirror too; another one, it's true, but just as candid. You must know now that I was shocked and quite as badly frightened.

And now you want your clothes, say you can never come back to get them. Well, dear, I've put them away till autumn; sorted them as best I might. The light things, the bright gay frocks, white shoes and socks I've put in with my summer things, the sailor-pants and jerseys, even the beret you made me wear against my better judgment. I've got the same room by the sea, the canary and a fresh supply of flannel. The wind is brisk yet and the sea like thunder, but it warms each day toward summer. Do catch a bite to eat and then the midnight. The morning air is fresh and bright. Reg has a new sail on the sailboat, asks when you're coming, is saving every afternoon until you come. We've been around the breakwater in a spanking breeze a time or two, but it's not really fun without you. The town is lively and gay all day; the bed is cold and lonely and the light burns late. Do hurry; a wire will find me at the train.



ANGER

Gertrude Diamant

They walked together to the edge of the field, to where the plow stood—where he stopped and stared at her, until his eyes quivered half-shut, answering his thought. "So it's no, then," he said with hostile finality. She nodded. "It's no!" he shouted exultantly, and turned and took hold of the reins, and stood moulding and tearing them, while his face grew slowly red. Then he looked around, and saw again the horses

and the edge of the field and the furrows. He braced himself and gave off a cry to the horses, as if a bad taste had suddenly come up into his mouth.

Mary Burnham walked slowly along the stone fence that led to the woods. "*He's* angry," she said to herself. "*He's* the angry one!" and she sat down on the stones, her body slack with the laughter of it. She sat with her large knees lolling apart under her tight skirt, and looked across the field to where he worked, a small thin man running after the plow. She thought what a fool he was. And when he turned the horses around and could see her from the far edge of the field, she rose again, shaking him from her, and went with flaunting heavy strides into the woods.

"The man is a fool," she assured herself, as she bent to gather the dry sticks of wood. "A fool," she continued, parading him through her mind, a sight for her silent laughter. Saw his way of walking through the fields, like a child, with his short legs relaxed to the rising and falling of the earth . . . saw his droll, serious face, so vacant and portentous that it always gave off the expression of what he was doing: a going-to-feed-the-horses-expression, a preparing-food-for-the-dogs-expression. Saw him sitting in the kitchen at night and looking at her humbly, and then suddenly a sly animal consciousness would leap out from his eyes, leap out to her, demanding . . . and he would guiltily call it back, as if it were an unruly dog. Well, what did he want of her then? What did he want when he looked that way? Something tightened in her with anger and denial. No, he wouldn't get it. Rest assured, she told herself, he wouldn't get it.

Weary at last with bending over, she straightened herself, bracing her shoulders and looking around with the self-consciousness of being alone. Then with an instinct to touch something she put out her hand to snap at the twigs. But they no longer broke between her fingers, dry and brittle as they had done all winter. Now they resisted. They bent and were strong with a new marrow in them. They leaped away from her when she let go, like live things escaping. Spring . . . the word snorted in her, and she sniffed the warm, decayed smell of the earth. Her heart began to beat with violent anger, an anger that caught at her throat and made her legs go weak. She turned and walked to the house, her feet crashing deep through the dry leaves . . . walked slowly, but it was a flight. She went into the kitchen and shut the door, and stood with her back against it, her heart beating as if she had just fought something.

Her brother was looking in at her through the open window. "You can bring in the wood that I gathered," she called out sharply to him. He stood outside the window, staring in at her, swinging his hand. In his loosely-cupped hand he held the sunlight, a glittering sharp stone of it

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burning into his palm. He swung his hand unaware, and stared at her with eyes misted over with sunlight. "You're feeling pretty mean today, aren't you!" he said.

But the kitchen was a refuge. It was dark and close with the smell of kerosene and food and soiled clothing. It appeased her for a while, giving her continuity with the winter. But when her eye lighted on the windows, and she saw the blue sky blazing in, her anger returned. It leaped out to everything she touched with the eagerness of passion. It flowed through her in a current, craving to wrestle with things, to feel an antagonist. She nudged her mother away from the table, and began to pile up the dishes herself.

"Why, what's gotten into you?" her mother asked, looking up at her with small, frightened eyes.

"You're too slow," Mary snapped. "When you were a little girl," she explained, looking down at her mother with patient fury, "you stood around watching all the time. And now you're an old woman, and you stand around just the same, trying to help like a child. Why don't you go and sit down?"

Her mother went away, holding her small wrinkled hands tightly clenched and close to her breasts, as if she had grown ashamed of them. Outside the window her brother stood again, and looked at Mary with eyes that were infinitely cynical. She turned and stared back at him, while her hand steeped in the dish-pan, growing red and fungoid with the sudden nourishment of hot water. Still staring at him, and still in the trance of her anger, she withdrew her hand and walked over to the window.

"I'm going away from here, today," she said softly.

He pursed his lips for a whistle.

"I'm going away. I won't be around here any more."

"Where are you going?"

"I don't know. I won't be around here any more."

His chin was resting on the window-ledge. His head ripened in the window like a strange fruit . . . but looking after her as she went with eyes of profound mockery.

Upstairs she came upon her mother again, perching at her sewing-machine on the narrow shelf of landing under the window. At sight of her, Mary's anger leaped out afresh, and closed with her mother in a tight embrace. She stepped from the stairs on to the landing with a wide spread of her legs, trying to avoid contact.

"I'm going away from here today," she said.

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Her mother stroked the wheel of the sewing-machine into silence, and lifted her head. "Where are you going?"

"I don't know. I won't be around here any more."

"Where are you going?"

The question hung between them with stubborn cunning.

"I'm going with *him*."

She had stepped over to the window and stood facing her mother, her head inclined under the slanting wall. A smile that had the same stubborn cunning as the question crept into her face. In a while her mother too began to smile. The smile grew heavy on her lips and drew her head down with its sweet, sleepy weight. She sat with head bowed low over her machine, but underneath was the fixed obscenity of her smile.

"Are you going with Richard, then?" she asked too softly.

Mary gave no answer. Behind her smile her anger watched, and she saw that her mother was old. With an old hand she smoothed down the cloth, and stroked the wheel of her sewing-machine. Whatever she touched she soothed with her hand, giving to all matter an automatic caress. So she would touch Mary, passing her on the stairs, or fitting a new dress to her. Mary saw how her mother caressed the cloth with her withered old hand, and her flesh was affronted. She stood bending toward her mother, smiling at her, and repelling her with her whole body, as if to cancel the birth from her.

"Yes, I am going with him."

"It's *time* you were married," her mother said, gauging her with narrowed eyes.

"Is it?" she asked with bland fury.

"What made you decide on it today?"

"I don't know," Mary answered. She edged away and went into her room. Her voice came back so resonant with anger that it sounded almost joyful, "I don't know."

But here in her room was the last refuge. What did it want of her, this anger? Here it must relent, or she must go away. She lay down on the bed as an act of surrender to it. It was an enemy that had seized her. She had fought it back at first with the rage of her whole body. It had withdrawn a little and loosened its hold. Now she must ambush it again, her limbs must lie lurking for it, quiet and passive.

From outside her door came the droning of her mother's sewing-machine, and downstairs she heard the clatter that her brother made, bringing in the wood. She heard Richard plowing in the field far away, making strange ugly cries to the horses as if he was always tasting something bad

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in his mouth. She thought how he would come into the kitchen again that night, and sit and look at her with mute, longing eyes . . . until she would have to rise and shake him from her with the brusque straightening of her body. The man is a fool, she told herself . . . and yet, she thought, it would be good in her anger to take hold of other flesh, to grasp someone and wrestle with him shoulder to shoulder, feel another body resisting hers. She rose from the bed and went out of the house and strode through the fields, a large angry woman.

He saw her coming and reined in the horses. Now he stood waiting for her with hostile eyes, and turned his face from her when she drew near.

"What I want to know," he said harshly, "it this: are we going to get married?"

"Of course we will get married," Mary said. She stepped close to him and put her hands, that were full of strength and the desire to wrestle, on his shoulders, and looked into his face with her mother's slow, cunning smile.



WHITE MULE

William Carlos Williams

CHAPTER X

STRIKE!

It was six o'clock, perhaps a few minutes earlier. Joe was in his stocking feet, his suspenders hanging down.

Why in hell don't you keep some toilet paper in this house? he shouted sticking his head in at the bedroom door.

Gurlie was hardly awake. Lottie sat up in her crib. What's that you're yelling about? said Gurlie.

What kind of a house is this?

Oh, forget it, said his wife, What's the matter now?

No toilet paper in the bathroom. No order anywhere. Where are my clean shirts?

Have you looked in the drawer of your chiffonier?

Yes.

Well, look again, said Gurlie and you'll find them. And you'll find the toilet paper on top of the medicine cabinet if you have any eyes.

I can't for the life of me see what you do with yourself all day long, continued Joe, You never do any work that I can see. Nothing is taken care of.

Look here, young man, said Gurlie, sitting up suddenly. Mind what you're saying. I work. I hate this being cooped up in a box like this all day long. I'm not used to it. I can't keep every button on your shirts and every hole in your socks stitched up just when you think I ought to. But you're no wonder yourself—at a lot of things.

Well, all right, all right.

Yes, it's all right when you want to yell but I must keep quiet.

I never heard it yet, said Joe.

Well, I'll tell you one thing. Get me out of here, went on his wife, I want to get into the country. I need air. I want to feel the dirt. I'll show you what work is. I can work. But I can't do this housework all day long. I'll go crazy.

Go ahead, said Joe, it won't be any different than it is now.

Gurlie checked herself at the instant of a blind fury as it flashed into her mind what day it was and the dangers that lay ahead. Stepping down a peg from an instinctive retort in kind to her husband's irritable attack, she contented herself with:

You! You know as well as me that you'd wear the same pants, and shirt too, from one year's end to the other if I didn't take them away from you before you disgrace yourself—

This ended it. Joe had to smile to himself—but wouldn't show it. Well, get some toilet paper in the place.

There's plenty of it in the kitchen closet.

Why don't you put it in the book case where it will be convenient when we need it, said Joe. But she didn't answer him this time. She kicked her feet out sidewise from under the sheets and in her nightgown walked barefoot to the kitchen, dashing some cold water into her face at the sink and then opening the draughts of the range, put the kettle on.

The baby was crying. The new maid wouldn't come for another hour—Gurlie took up the baby, put it on its chair, pulled down the hinged tray and let it stay there while she went back to put some clothes on. Joe came in and looked at it. The baby was in a wonderful mood.

Joe sat there, contemplating it with affectionate pleasure. Gurlie came back, having put on a new face with her dress, gay in her rough manner—carelessly sticking up her hair any old way—fastening her dress. There, sit down, she said to Joe as if he himself were a baby, sit down and let mama feed you. Poor man, you must have lots on your mind. Shall I make you some toast?

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No, said Joe, I don't want anything but a cup of coffee.

Oh, but you must eat something. I'll fry you an egg—with some bacon.

All right, only do it, said Joe, and do it quick. He turned to the baby again which was grunting in a succession of grunts and doubling its face down on the tray of its chair, afterward, laying its cheek on the cool wood and then turning and looking at the wood with curiosity, then laying its cheek down again and grinning, then banging the wood with its open fists. Squealing with pleasure. Joe snoozled his face up to the baby's which the mite tried to avoid hilariously. But suddenly it reached out and grabbed Joe by the moustache, wildly with a spasmodic jerk. Joe's head went along involuntarily, he could not pull away. So he took the baby's tight little fist in his own, tried to loosen it.

With a terrifying shriek the baby let go of the man's hair. Joe sat up. But the baby shrieked and shrieked in terrific earnest. Gurlie dropped her cooking. The child was in agony.

Suddenly Gurlie lifted up the tray and, as she did so, both saw that the little finger of its other hand was dripping with blood. The nail was almost off. In Joe's struggle to free himself, he had slightly lifted the tray and the infant placing its hand in the open hinge to steady itself in its struggles had been caught viciously in the trap. Joe went white, sat down to keep from falling. Helpless, speechless.

Oh! said Gurlie, Oh!

Joe took out his handkerchief.

No, No, said Gurlie.

Send for the doctor, said Joe.

The doctor? Go on now, she added roughly-gently, get out of here—Drink your coffee first. I'll take care of this. It's nothing.

But—The baby was still shrilly screaming but Gurlie just shook her head deprecatingly and with one hand on her husband's back had him soon at the door. Go on—and don't get hurt. Come back to me tonight.

It may not be till late, said Joe.

The day was a hard one for Gurlie. The morning paper mentioned it but the evening paper seemed made of nothing else to her uneasy sight. They've had a hot time today down town Mrs. Stecher, said the old fellow who sold papers under the elevated stairs at the corner. There'll be bloodshed tomorrow if it keeps on this way.

Gurlie's code forbade any sign of fear in public. I suppose you'd be scared of your life to go down there, she replied to the man, who looked up at her sharply. But her heart felt weak. She turned and left him, it seeming a mile she had to walk nonchalantly to her front steps, slowly,

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as if it didn't matter, and into the house. She stood inside the door without going up and scanned the headlines: Strike! Scenes of disorder! Violence! Typographers being imported from Paterson and as far west as Buffalo. Both sides girding their loins. A general strike among the printers unless the Pressmen's demands are acceded to by noon tomorrow. Winthrop, Hallowell & Co. the center—She read no more. Folded the paper. Went upstairs to make supper.

The enforced inaction all day, violence within herself had Gurlie nutty. As she moved about the house, she brushed the children aside or stuck things into their hands in a thoughtless way to which they responded very nicely—it must be admitted.

After a while they seemed to act just as if she wasn't there, amused themselves with all sorts of little ordinarily forbidden tricks. Lottie dragged an old coffee pot, which she loved, onto the kitchen floor and the baby—the bandage off her finger—smeared herself gloriously with her oatmeal, finally succeeding in getting the empty bowl right on top of her head.

Gurlie sat by the window but couldn't stand it. The strike—the word: strike! made her strike out with her two fists—into the air. Images of men taking hold of each other. Joe standing up and trying to get through a crowd of hostile pressmen lined up by the door to the place. Joe, of small size, but determined walking right past them. One of them knocked off his hat. Joe leaned to pick it up. They kicked him. He stumbled. He tried to see who it was when they closed in—Gurlie leaped to her feet from before the window—Her hand flew to her throat. Then she—walked to the kitchen—So it had gone all day long. Now it was dark.

She washed the children, did up the baby's finger again—Somehow or other the little thing had never paid any attention to the sore finger after the first shock of pain—The children in bed asleep, supper at the back of the range, she couldn't stand it any longer but went out into the street and walked up and down—About ten o'clock she saw Joe come out of the Elevated Exit—

What are you doing here in the street, he said and kissed her. He looked dirty and tired. Are you all right? Sure, why not? Humph! she replied—and they walked back slowly to the entrance to their building.

It had been a tough day, but not so bad—not yet, Joe told her chuckling. She was relieved and thrilled seeing him in such a capital mood. Sure, he replied to her, the streets were full of them. What did you expect me to do, run?

But—! You're not hurt?

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The whole police force was out. Anyhow, we kept the place open. And we'll keep it open. We won't miss a day. I'll beat 'em so bad they'll never get over it. A pack of dirty, low down thieves and blackguards—yelling and throwing stones—breaking windows—they can't even throw straight. Have 'em arrested! Arrest them all if it comes to that.

Gurlie was relieved, delighted, sat close to her husband with one hand on his shoulder while he was eating eagerly, hungrily, talking between mouthfuls. Suddenly he stopped. How's the baby's finger? She's all right. I couldn't get it out of my head all day long. Píugh! said Gurlie puffing lips out, it's nothing. Every once in a while I could see that broken nail and the blood. Sure she's all right? A little piece of rag around it. She's forgotten it already.

I'm tired, said Joe, I want to go to bed.

And is that all you're going to tell me?

Well, what is there to tell? We kept the shop open. They can't do anything. Let 'em try it, that's all.

And you're going down there again tomorrow?

What do you think I'm going to do? Joe looked at her surprised. Expect me to run away?

But if they hurt you. I'm going down there with you. If you think it's any fun to stay shut up in this prison all day long while you're down there likely to get hurt—

Agh, they're afraid, said Joe laughing. A lot of cowards.

Next day Gurlie was beside herself. Joe left before six, pulling his hat on, bending his shoulders a little forward it seemed as if conscious of the approaching attack. The newspapers were again full of it. Carrying on her feud with the old newsdealer at the corner she went out for the morning paper and a noon edition. But sensing his scorn, not a word spoken, in the afternoon she walked three blocks to another news stand for the latest.

It was Thursday, the girl's afternoon off. The babies were alone for the moment. Both children were asleep. She didn't realize how long it would take her.

Lottie woke on her mother's bed where she had thrown herself and looked around. The baby in its own little wooden crib was lying on its back both arms flung wide, completely relaxed. Lottie got up and walked all through the house looking for her mother, then came back to the bedroom. Mama's gone, she said.

So she returned to the kitchen and got herself a glass of water at the faucet standing on a chair to draw it and drank some. Holding the half full glass in both hands, she went in to the baby again and drank some

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more. Then with the glass in one hand, she pinched the baby's outflung arm through the bars of the crib, pinched it hard. The baby waked, pulled back its arm, sat up with a struggle—and blinking its eyes grinned at her sister.

Lottie tried to feed it water from the glass through the wooden bars. It spilled as the baby tried to grip the glass. Then the baby choked and some of the water went into Lottie's face. Lottie took some water in her own mouth and, imitating the baby, blew it out into the infant's face in retaliation.

Flossie was delighted. Lottie did it again. Great success, spitting it out magnificently.

Lottie now handed a rattle in to the baby which she promptly threw out again with great gusto. Now the older girl put a rubber ball into the crib between the bars. The baby crawled to it. Managed to push it to the floor again. And laughed excitedly. Lottie put it back. The baby threw it out. Each time she did so she slapped her hands together in wild excitement. So the older sister began to fetch and throw everything loose she could find into the crib to beat the baby to it. Books, an old pipe, a pillow, a paper cutter—anything—shoes, and the baby took each thing as it was able and threw it out again looking delightedly into her sister's face for approval and crawling all over the crib, falling, rising again, the best it was able.

Till finally Lottie could find nothing else to throw in, she had finally done it so fast the baby couldn't keep up with her and had just sat back and watched—thrilled at so much attention. So Lottie got a chair and climbed into the crib herself, over the top to get them and threw some of them out again, the baby leaning over to watch each object as it fell and perhaps rolled away. Then Lottie had an idea. She tried to loosen the moveable side of the crib. Failing to do that, she got behind the baby and tried to lift it up over the top. Impossible. But she chided her little sister. Climb up, she said. And again she grasped the infant around the waist from behind and pushing with all her might lifted her up a little to the edge of the cribside.

With tremendous effort, pushing hard, finally she succeeded and the infant hung face down over the edge of the crib. It wasn't frightened but seemed completely serious and submissive before its sister's efforts, passively waiting. As it teetered there, Lottie a little afraid now, holding it back by the skirts its head went lower, then with a sudden slip it went all the way down with a rush over the edge—on its back into the chair. As it went, its marvellous little hands flew out and finding them clung desperately to the crib bars. And remarkable to say, still there wasn't a sound

more than a little grunt and sucking of the breath on Flossie's part as she labored.

There on its back in blank astonishment balanced on the chair hanging on to the crib for dear life lay the infant until Lottie could slide over the edge of the crib to the ground again. She looked critically at the child a moment then, leaving it, ran off instinctively to find her mother. Coming back and seeing the baby in the same position, she stood and looked at it again from both sides at a loss. Then she tried to loosen its hands. Nothing doing. The infant wasn't convinced, though it smiled a little appreciatively. So Lottie changed tactics, coming to herself again now and took hold of the chair, pulled from under it until one hand slipping, it suddenly slid sidewise and down square on the top of its head on the carpeted floor. Lottie watched it with fascinated interest. The baby lay still for a moment, you couldn't tell which end was which. Then, still without a sound, it found itself, got up on its hands and knees and looked around.

In a moment it was creeping. In another it had found something small, a button, which it picked up. Sitting down abruptly, it examined the strange object, then put it into its mouth, turned on its hands again and headed for the back of the house.

What a mess when Gurlie came in. Lottie and the baby were in the middle of the kitchen floor, Lottie with an apron around her neck wielding a broom. The baby black with coal from the scuttle, her mouth black as the scuttle itself. Just as Gurlie came in the baby was clinging uncertainly to the scuttle's edge, trying to turn her head around without falling and—

Lottie! shrieked the mother, What have you done?

Joe didn't come in till nearly midnight dog-weary and serious, uncommunicative this time. He wouldn't open his mouth more than to say, We'll beat 'em. He'd had his supper. Took off his things and was asleep almost before his head hit the pillow.

But next morning, the sun up and Gurlie ahead of him this time, he was ready—eager even to talk. She was a fascinated listener.

Saw the old man. I mean all the partners were there. I mean Seymour. He's a fine old fellow. I always liked him. Kindly—no good in business. They're scared this time. Means a lot to them to win this strike.

What'll they do for you if you do win it?

Fire me, I suppose, said Joe in his old time cynical good humor.

But what happened? What kept you so late?

Moving mattresses, said Joe.

Mattresses?

Yes, mattresses; fifty of them. The damned scabs. We got to lock 'em in. As soon as one of them went up to the hospital, they all wanted to quit.

The disgust Joe put into that word "quit" contorted his whole body.

So I had to lock 'em in. Now let 'em think. Let their strike *leaders*—and again he emphasized the word with savage purpose—tell 'em what to do next. And he laughed his half bitter, Ho, ho, ho, ho!

What! said Gurlie. Is it as bad as that?

Well, we've got to get the work done, don't we?

But isn't it dangerous?

What? to sleep on a mattress? Sure, You might catch cold.

But what good is that? insisted Gurlie. They have to go out to eat.

Oh we don't feed 'em so bad, said Joe. Gurlie was looking at him in admiration. We got plenty of water. Bread. A little butter, not much because there's no place to keep ice. But canned beans. Tomato soup. Oh they're having a regular picnic.

Gurlie shook her head silently. You're the only one that's going in and out then. Sure, said Joe. The bosses decided they'd spend the week-end in Newport.

Breakfast done, Joe left his wife at the downstairs door where she had gone with him in her uneasiness. She watched him go along the nearly empty street to the elevated entrance. His narrow, straight shoulders, the black coat, his determined even-footed walk—he didn't look very strong to her, smoking his cigar—his cheap cigar. I wonder how long it will last. I don't think he can beat them.

The third night Joe came in jubilant. The regular Money Order shipment had gone off on time. The fourth night he confided to his wife that in a week he wouldn't care what in hell the Pressmen or anybody else wanted. We'll finish the Government contract then close the place down till they come begging on their knees for us to open it again. I got 'em where I want 'em this time. The lazy suckers.

But Monday night the following week he was again later than usual. Gurlie had begun to relax, the strike, after all, was only a strike, everything had been going along smoothly in spite of the hard feeling. The men were afraid of the police. Joe had been jostled once or twice. A boy even hit him in the back with a small stone one morning—but that was all.

But when he did finally appear this time his tie was crooked, his shirt collar mashed and blackened, his hat out of shape.

They held me up, he said. He was extremely serious and low-voiced.

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Are you hurt? No. Where were the Police? Oh, they laid for me, at the entrance to the Chambers Street elevated station.

What did they do?

Stopped me. Put a pistol in my face.

Joe! What did you do?

Well, I'm here, ain't I?

Did you fight, then?

No. I didn't have a chance. Two of them. I recognized one anyhow. Who was it? No, I'm not telling anybody that just yet. I suppose it's that Gas House Gang.

What did they want?

Want me to call off the strike.

What did you say?

I told them I couldn't call it off. They told me I'd have to. What did you say then? I didn't say anything. One of them grabbed me by the collar while the other stuck the pistol against my side.

Oh! said Gurlie, I refuse to let you go down there tomorrow unless you are protected. What is the city thinking of?

The city can't think, said Joe.

I refuse to let you. I've got something to say about that. I don't want you killed. What about me and my children? Sure, the Company don't care if you're killed. They can get someone else. If you go, I go with you.

Calm down, said Joe, seriously, however, I'll get a cop to take me to the station at night after this. And meet you in the morning, added Gurlie. All right, said Joe—but they haven't the nerve to do anything in the daytime.

But what about up here, coming home late? They'll follow you—

I'll take out a license to carry a pistol—tomorrow morning. But—but—but! Can you shoot? said Gurlie. As well as they can.

But you didn't finish telling me what happened.

Nothing happened, they heard someone coming and beat it. I got on the elevated and came home.

But what about tomorrow? What will they do next? What will happen?

Nothing, said Joe, What do you expect?

CHAPTER XI

THE GIVEAWAY

He was a nice old gentleman with pince-nez glasses and spats sitting

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in the middle stall of the only available bench in that part of the park. The other benches, though cleared of snow, were either in the shadow and icy or in the sun, where it was warm—delightfully warm—for December, and so wet from the thaw. He had several sheets of newspaper under him.

He looked up and smiled at the girl with the baby carriage. He could see she wanted rest.

Better join me, he said. I don't think there's another dry bench in the neighborhood. She stopped a moment, looked at him—and she was tired pushing the baby carriage on the uneven walks.

It must be rather hard work, he commented seeing her hesitate. Won't you take a piece of this newspaper?

But instead of waiting for him to get up and give it to her she sat down quickly toward the end of the bench so she wouldn't have to accept his offer.

That's all right, he went on, seating himself again, it's not wet there.

She turned deliberately away from him frowning and leaned into the carriage to arrange the baby's covers. The thing was sleeping blissfully just a little face showing between the wooly cap and the blanket edge.

How old are you? said the man, speaking very gently and quietly.

Fifteen, said the girl—and then bit her lip for having answered him.

Do you often come out here with the baby?

Sure. Every day sometimes. That's dumb, she added to herself.

About this time in the morning?

Sure. Why not?

Not many people do it, these days. The finest of the year I often think, gloomy, quiet—but very restful. But a person of my age is often lonesome. Do you know anything about that? No, of course not. Young people have the better of us but they understand very little. A good thing too. Don't you think so?

She looked at him as if she thought he was dippy.—Do you come of a large family, he continued.

What do you take me for, a dictionary? she decided to be rude.

He laughed. Well, maybe you'd tell me the baby's name then.

Spider.

What!?

Spider.

Your sister?

No. I'm just the maid. And she started to get up to be on her way.

Please don't go, he said. I'm sorry if I've bothered you. Please. Please. I'd rather go myself. I won't bother you any more. So she sat down again while he leaned on a cane he had between his knees and

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looked the other way. She gave him a good look while his back was turned and felt sorry for the old geezer. She had nothing to do but sit there.

Gee, it's terribly cold today, she said after a while as if speaking to the trees. The old fellow turned toward her quickly with a smile on his face. Anyhow, it's cold for a baby, I think, she added.

It's good for them, said the man, so long as they're properly protected, especially from the wind. The wind is a baby's enemy. It's especially important to keep cold draughts from coming up under the carriage and blowing through the mattress. Did you know that? All carriages should be lined with some impervious material, like oil cloth or paper, for instance. It keeps out the wind. Is the child warm enough?

Sure, said the girl. She'd let you know if she wasn't. She says Mammy and Baby. She won't stay in your lap any more. You know there's about fourteen kids in the block where we live has whooping cough.

You don't say? said the man. Does she creep? and with that he ventured to get up and look at the little sleeping thing. But it wasn't sleeping. I let her go everywhere, said the girl. She's very friendly, except to people with glasses.

Yes, the man took her up, to an infant I suppose glasses must seem like big terrible eyes. The girl looked at him as though she thought there might be something in what he had said. Yea, it's the glasses scares her.

But the baby wasn't scared. So she continued, But she isn't afraid of anything at all. See! she spoke to the baby, Who's that?

The baby looked wide eyed at the stranger, lost in wrapt observation, moving her eyes the least bit from time to time from point to point over the features of the face leaning above her—in blank astonishment. The man patted the blanket where she lay very gently and then sat down again near the girl. A smart little thing she seems, he said.

She can say so many words. I think she can say fifteen words.

What! so many?

Well, you know, they sound like words. Yea. She has four teeth, two up and two down. She fell out of bed this morning. But she always looks up smiling.

She's rather small, said the man. Does she eat?

Oh she eats everything now—except cows milk. I've given her cows milk and she vomits it. I give her a whole tomato yesterday—

A tomato at nine months!

Sure. She wanted it. She sucked the middle out of it and threw the skin away. Bread. An egg sometimes. That's the only thing she eats greedy—that's an egg. She's never hungry in the morning. Say are you a doctor or something? said the girl finally, checking herself.

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No, no, said the stranger. But I have two little nieces of my own and I'm very much interested in children.

Well, I hope she doesn't get whooping cough, that's all I say, went on the girl. If she does I quit. I've seen enough of that.

You wouldn't do that would you?

Sure I would. Why not? I've got myself to think of.

But they'd need you more than ever at such a time.

Oh I ain't been working there long.

Are they nice people?

Germans.

The man smiled to himself quietly and cleared his throat quickly. Oh, whooping cough isn't so bad if you keep them out of doors, I guess.

Yea. I heard that. But the reason I keep her out most times is that she eats better. Days that she's out she'll eat a pretty good dish of spinach. She needs it, believe me. You never seen such a skinny kid. But you ought to see the little red-head down stairs from us over by the river—he's so dumb. Yah, yah, yah, yah! that's all he says but you can't help loving him.

You must like children.

Them and talking. God give me the gift of gab—once I get started. That's about all he did give me, Ma says. I make use of it though. Guess I better get moving, she added thinking maybe she had been getting a little bit too confidential toward the end. So long.

Good bye, said the man getting up politely. It's good of you to have let me talk to you in this way. Take good care of the baby. I hope it doesn't get whooping cough.

She just stared at him, once again, and left. The baby, who was sitting up by this time, took hold of the edge of the carriage with its little mitts and kept straining out to keep sight of the figure sitting on the bench now fading off across the snow behind them.

Say Jim, said Maggie to the cop on the corner. You ought to have seen the old bird tried to pick me up in the park.

You don't say. You mean the old gentleman with the side whiskers?

Yea.

The cop laughed. He wasn't trying to pick you up. That's the Governor's brother. He lives around here.

Yea? Well, he can be the Pope's uncle for all I care, said the girl to show what she thought about men like that. The cop laughed at her some more. You better be gettin' home, he said. It's past noon.

It was whooping cough. Lottie came down with it first and then the baby, struggling to hold back each racking paroxysm. And Christmas

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coming on. Gurlie was angry, Whooping cough should come in the spring time, not now. But she didn't pay much attention to it.

The main thing was to keep the baby out of the house as much as possible. Only it started to vomit everything. So she told Maggie not to feed it much. What! said the girl. At night they burnt a lamp in its room with a smell of creosote to it.

It's fine today, said Gurlie once about the twentieth of the month, out wid yez! Take her to the Park. And remember what I've told you: don't feed her any junk. And keep away from other children, she added as an afterthought.

Maggie started out west. But at the corner she took a good look back and went round the block heading east then toward the river. I'll take you to the park, she said. And away she went, lickety split, tearing along with the carriage joggling in front of her as if it were a race. I'll take you to the park, she said again to the back of the baby carriage.

So the baby began to cough and vomited. Whew, said Maggie all in a sweat when she had to stop and take care of the brat. If you hold me up this way we'll never get there.

Then she lit out once more and pretty soon she arrived at the Carl Schultz Park overlooking the East River at 89th St. She went in one entrance of this round one of the paths and out again—Just so I can say I was in the park. At the exit she met another girl with a carriage.

It's got the whooping cough, she said. Keep away. Wait a minute, said the other, what's your sweat? They stood away from the carriage talking a few minutes.

Don't give her this, don't give her that, she says, said Maggie in a mocking affected tone of voice. Aw, they make me tired. The kid's lost a couple of pounds already. Ma says feed her anything she'll take. Milk's the worst. She vomits that easiest. You ought to see her sometimes when I pick her up, she's covered with it. In her hair, in her eyes. And smilin'. You gotta laugh, I wanna give her a break. I'm takin' her up to the gas tanks. Ma says if you walk around the gas tank it'll cure her.

Well, so long, said the other girl. See you Saturday night.

Maggie started out again toward two red painted gas tanks that could be seen now a few blocks further north on the river. As she went she walked slower and slower. She was a little scared. Suppose they should blow up! She looked around too, to see if anyone was watching her, thinking maybe someone had been spoofing her sending her up there—she felt kind of foolish. There might be men or boys in a place like that that would get fresh. Then the baby had another fit. That decided her, she'd do it. Once around anyhow. To go around one of the tanks seemed

to be the idea in her mind. You got to go all the way around, she said to herself.

It was a relief when she got there to see several other women with carriages and small children sitting behind a wire fence close to the tanks on boxes in the sun. They didn't pay any attention to her at all. Now she could smell the gas. Gee, that can't be good for a baby, she thought. It was quite strong near the enormous tank. The middle part was half way up in its frame and gave out a creaking sound from time to time as it filled. She was wondering what would happen if someone should light a match when she saw an old man in a cap sitting on a broken chair near the gate to the enclosure. He was smoking a pipe. She thought maybe you had to have a ticket or something to get in. Good afternoon, he said to her with a strong burr to his voice and with that she headed the carriage in and started around the tank. It was quite strong of gas in there.

First she headed away from the other women who were on the sunny side of the tank intending to go around it.

Hey, you can't go around there, said the old man.

Why not? said Maggie.

There's barbed wire twenty feet ahead of you, said the man. That's why. If it's the first time you're here I'll tell you you can sit there where the others are sittin' or no place at all. And don't throw any fruit peelings or waste paper around the place either, he added.

The baby has whooping cough, Maggie said.

Well, what else would you be here for if it didn't? said the man. You'll find an old box beyond, he added jerking his thumb over his shoulder and paid no more attention to her. The other women and children had been out of sight during this talk. Now one came with a baby in her arms and went out of the gate and away. Maggie, with her heart in her mouth, started the carriage along the rough gravel.

Now she could hear them—I'm not so fussy any more. You ought to see Winnie's baby. She eats everything and honestly she's beautiful.

And another one wiping the nose of her own child, said. She's getting an awfully gubby chin, sticking it out that way—Honestly it's terrible.

And while they were talking the baby in the next carriage sort of choked and began it. My god, there she goes! said one of the women: it was the worst Maggie had seen. While the woman was tending the child in its paroxysm she kept talking, describing the events as they happened—as if to relieve herself of her concern. Maggie watched fascinated: First she gets red, then purple—even her legs get blue and then her face is green. Look at her put her hands back of her head. You'd think she was going to choke to death.

Indeed Maggie thought she was.

Then the baby stopped her cough and began to vomit. She vomits about twenty times a day, concluded the woman. And so that emergency ended. Maggie wanted to run. But someone laughed and the women started to talk again and so Maggie pushed her carriage past them, while they looked at her in talking, and found the old box the man had told her about.

The wall of the tank was close behind her. Though she felt a little creepy about being so near the gas—still the others didn't mind it and so she began to realize—thinking of the stinking lamp they burned at night—that it was the gas maybe that cured the cough—not just the walking around the tank that did it.

There were four or five women who had their boxes gathered around in a small group in the middle of which was a middle aged rosy cheeked woman with greying hair who was always talking and laughing and keeping the others with their eyes pretty much upon her all the time. By her talk and her looks Maggie put her down at once, like herself, for a Mick. There were only two other carriages but at least three babies in arms and a few older children who kept sneaking off behind the tank whence they had to be fetched out yelling.

Get out of there, shouted the old man going around the fence with a stick in his hand to some older boys who had climbed on the fence after a ball. One of the women got up and threw it out to them.

Hello, Mrs. Falori! called out the rosy cheeked woman in the group to a big Italian woman going by.

Agh! and the one addressed, raising her hand, let out a sudden high pitched hawk's cry in answer to her, smiling the while.

Then little Flossie choked and went into a paroxysm. Maggie felt the other women looking at her and her own face go crimson. One of the women came over to help her. Aw, that's not so bad, said this one. My uncle told me with mine that when she goes into a kink to throw her up in the air and catch her.

Aren't you afraid you might miss her, said Maggie.

Oh I don't mean so high. I tried it and honestly it brought her out of it.

Spinach poisons her, one of the other women was saying, everywhere it touches her. She likes it well enough but it doesn't agree with her. The first time I gave it to her she broke out all around her mouth. I didn't know what it was but I found out later.

He's got a good pair of eyes, said another of the women speaking of one of the older children whom she had just captured and whose nose

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she was vigorously wiping of a chocolate smear. Yes, he don't miss much, so long as it's for his stomach.

I'll get money out of youse, said another to a small boy, if you don't keep off of that carriage.

Know her? Maggie heard then, Why Effie and I used to stand in line to sit on the same pot when we was kids. And all the women laughed uproariously.

Yes, kids are funny, said the rosy-faced woman. I saw him walking round the kitchen yesterday with the collander held up against his back side. Me's giving me a ride, he said. And they all laughed.

Did you ever hear of giving them bay leaves for gas, said another. They cook them down with water, some woman told my husband.

I want to pippy.

Lord, if I had a thousand I'd think I was in Heaven sittin' down. His bowels were terrible, something awful. Phaugh.

Sure, he climbs out of the carriage already. I have to keep him strapped in. He's up to such mischief when he's small, what'll he do later? he do later?

So it went. Maggie listened, watched them—all older than herself and she didn't think much of them. No kids for her. They'd have to chloroform her first. She looked in at her own little Flossie and decided she wasn't so bad though. Guessed she'd go home.

Every one of mine come at supper, another of the women was saying. And they are the hungriest kids! I never saw anything like it.

Good-bye, dearie, said the rosy cheeked lady, as Maggie finally walked off.

Good bye, said Maggie without looking at her. And as she stopped a minute to loosen the brake of the carriage which was stuck she heard finally:

I had it easy.

You must have had a left-handed doctor, someone else answered her. Say, he was left handed. How did you guess it?

Didn't you say it come easy?—And once again Maggie heard the women laugh as she went out of the gate. Good luck to you, said the old man there. Maggie gave him a smile but he wasn't even looking at her. She hurried off.

On the way she decided to try the baby on some crackers like she'd seen the women feeding their children back by the tank. Maybe they'd stay down better than the milk did. She went into a store she was passing and got a few for a nickel—chocolate coated. She gave one to the baby and put the rest in her pocket. The infant was delighted.

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Maggie was late. She hurried. At the corner of their block she took out her handkerchief and went carefully over the baby's face to remove all signs of the cracker.

Where in the world have you been? said Gurlie.

Over in the Park, said Maggie. Where did you think I was?

No impudence from you, Gurlie came back at her. I've been waiting almost an hour for you I want those potatoes peeled. It's long past the baby's eating time. It must be starved. Has it coughed much?

Not much, said Maggie.

Then the baby began. And before it was through the chocolate cracker was all over the blanket, all over the floor—it seemed five times as much as had ever gone into it.

Maggie grabbed her hat and fled.

(To be continued)



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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

MILLEN BRAND is living in Bloomfield, New Jersey, with his wife (Pauline Leader) and young daughter, Elinor. Both he and his wife are busy on new work.

PAUL BROWN writes from New Bedford, Massachusetts, where he is working at present.

J V CUNNINGHAM has been printed in *The Hound and Horn*.

WILLIAM WATROUS DEATS was born in Yonkers, New York in 1908. Being forced to withdraw from Amherst College because of poor health in 1929 he has been living and writing in the country. At present he makes his home in Barryville, New York.

GERTRUDE DIAMANT writes from New York City. She is the author of a novel.

SOL FURNAROFF lives in New York City. His work has been printed in *The New Masses* and *The New Republic*.

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MERLE HOYLEMAN is an Oklahoman, now resident of Pittsburgh.

GEORGE MEETER writes from Philadelphia. His story "The Endless Lane" is an excerpt from a novel, "Within This Circle." He has recently contributed an essay to *The Southern Literary Review*.

G H NEIMAN writes from Denver, Colorado.

CHARLES KENDALL O'NEIL has recently returned to this country from Mallorca and Ireland. Within the last two months he has had a story in *Story* and an article in *Vanity Fair*.

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC. REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912.

Of Pagany: A Native Quarterly published at New York for Oct. 1, 1932
State of New York, County of New York, ss.

Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Richard Johns, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the editor-owner of the Pagany: A Native Quarterly and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are:

Publisher, Richard Johns, 9 Gramercy Park; Editor, Richard Johns, 9 Gramercy Park; Managing Editor, Richard Johns, 9 Gramercy Park; Business Manager, Richard Johns, 9 Gramercy Park.

2. That the owner is: Richard Johns, 9 Gramercy Park, New York, N. Y.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

RICHARD JOHNS, Editor.

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